

operations upon their souls, causing them to taste something of religion, and yet like persons in the market that taste of what they will not come up to the price of, and so but take a taste and leave it. Persons may taste religion, and seem to like it, if they could have it upon easier terms, than denying themselves, and taking up their cross and following Christ. 3. They may be made partakers of the Holy Ghost, that is, of his extraordinary and miraculous gifts; they may have cast out devils in the name of Christ, and done many other mighty works. Such gifts in the apostolical age were sometimes bestowed upon those that had no true saving grace. 4. They may taste of the good word of God; they may have some relish of gospel doctrines, may hear the word with pleasure; they may remember much of it, and talk well of it, and yet never be cast into the form and mould of it, nor has it dwelt richly in them. 5. They may have tasted of the powers of the world to come; they may have been under strong impressions concerning heaven and hell; some desires of heaven, and dread of going to hell. These lengths hypocrites may go, and after all turn apostates. Now hence observe, 1. That those great things are spoken here of those that may fall away, yet it is not here said of them, that they were truly converted, or that they were justified; there is more in true saving grace, than all that is here said of apostates. 2. This therefore is no proof of the final apostasy of true saints. These indeed may fall frequently and foully, but yet they shall not totally nor finally fall from God, the purpose and the power of God, the purchase and the prayer of Christ, the promise of the gospel, the everlasting covenant that God has made with them, ordered in all things; and sure the indwelling of the Spirit, and the immortal seed of the word, these are their security. But the tree that hath not these roots will not stand.

2. The apostle describes the dreadful case of such as fall away after they had gone so far in the profession of religion. 1. The greatness of the sin of apostasy. It is crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame. They declare that they approve of what the Jews did in crucifying Christ, and that they would be glad to do the same thing again if it were in their power. They pour the greatest contempt upon the Son of God, and therefore upon God himself, who expects all should reverence his Son, and honour him as they honour the Father. They do what in them lies to represent Christ and Christianity as a shameful thing, and would have him to be a publick shame and reproach. This is the nature of apostasy. 2. The great misery of apostates. First, It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; it is extremely hazardous; very few instances can be given of those that have gone so far and fallen away, and yet ever brought to true repentance, such a repentance as is indeed a renovation of the soul. Some have thought this is sin against the Holy Ghost, but without ground. The sin here mentioned is plainly apostasy, both from the truth and ways of Christ: God can renew them to repentance, but he seldom does it; and with men themselves it is impossible. Secondly, Their misery is exemplified by a proper similitude, taken from the ground, that after much cultivation brings forth nothing but briars and thorns; and therefore is nigh unto cursing, and its end is to be burned, ver. 8. And to give this the greater force, here is observed the difference that there is between the good ground and the bad, that these contraries being set one over against the other, may illustrate each other.

1. Here is a description of the good ground; it drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it. Believers do not only taste of the word of God, but they drink it in; and this good ground bringeth forth fruit answerable to the cost laid out, for the honour of Christ, and the comfort of his faithful ministers, who are under Christ dressers of the ground. And this fruit-field or garden receives the blessing. God declares fruitful Christians blessed, and all wise good men account them blessed: They are blessed with increase of grace, and with farther establishment and glory at last.

2. Here is the different case of the bad ground: It bears briars and thorns, not only barren of good fruit, but fruitful in that which is bad, briars and thorns, fruitful in sin and wickedness, which is troublesome and hurtful to all about them, and will be most so to sinners themselves at last; and then such ground is rejected. God will concern himself no more about such wicked apostates; he will let them alone, and cast them out of his care; he will command the clouds, that they rain no more upon them. Divine influences shall be restrained, and that is not all, but such ground is nigh unto cursing; so far from receiving the blessing, that a dreadful curse hangs over it; though yet, through the patience of God, the curse is not fully executed. Lastly, its end is to be burned. Apostasy will be punished with everlasting burnings, the fire that shall never be quenched. This is the sad end to which apostasy leads, and therefore Christians should go on and grow in grace, lest if they do not go forward, they should go backward, till they bring matters to this woful extremity of sin and misery.

9. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we

thus speak. 10. For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the faints, and do minister. 11. And we desire, that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end: 12. That ye be not slothful, but followers of them, who through faith and patience inherit the promises. 13. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, 14. Saying, Surely, blessing, I will bless thee, and multiplying, I will multiply thee. 15. And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. 17. Wherein God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: 18. That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lye, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: 19. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entreth into that within the vail, 20. Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

The apostle having applied himself to the fears of the Hebrews, for the exciting their diligence, and preventing their apostasy, now proceeds to apply himself to their hopes, and candidly declares the good hope he had concerning them, that they would persevere; and proposes to them the great encouragements they had in the way of their duty.

1. He freely and openly declares the good hope he had concerning them, that they would endure to the end, ver. 9. *But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you.* Observe, 1. There are things that accompany salvation; things that are never separated from salvation; things that shew the person to be in a state of salvation, and will issue in eternal salvation. 2. The things that accompany salvation, are better things than ever any hypocrite or apostate enjoyed. They are better in their nature, and in their issue. 3. That it is our duty to hope well of those in whom nothing appears to the contrary. 4. Ministers must sometimes speak by way of caution to those of whose salvation they have good hopes: And those that have in themselves good hopes, as to their eternal salvation, should yet consider seriously, how fatal a disappointment it would be if they should fall short. Thus they are to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

2. He proposes arguments and encouragements to them to go on in the way of their duty. 1. That God had wrought a principle of holy love and charity in them which had discovered itself in suitable works which would not be forgotten of God, ver. 10. *God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love, &c.* Good works and labour proceeding from love to God, are commendable; and what is done to any in the name of God, shall not go unrewarded. What is done to the saints as such, God takes it as done to himself. 2. Those that expect a gracious reward for their labour of love, must continue in it as long as they have ability and opportunity. *Ye have ministered to the saints, and ye do minister; and we desire, that every one of you do shew the same diligence.* 3. Those that persevere in a diligent discharge of their duty, shall attain to the full assurance of hope in the end. Observe, 1. Full assurance is higher degree of hope; is full assurance of hope; they differ not in nature, but only in degree. 2. Full assurance is attainable by great diligence and perseverance to the end.

3. He proceeds to set before them caution and counsel how to attain this full assurance of hope to the end. 1. That they should not be slothful; that will clothe a man with rags: They must not love their ease, nor lose their opportunities. 2. That they would follow the good examples of those that had gone before, ver. 12. Where learn, 1. There are some, who from assurance, are gone to inherit the promises. They believed them before, now they inherit them; they are got safe to heaven. 2. The way by which they came to the inheritance, was that of faith and patience. These graces were implanted in their souls, and drawn forth into act and exercise in their lives. And if we ever expect to inherit as they do, we must follow them in the way of faith and patience. And those that do thus follow them in the way, shall overtake them at the end, and be partakers of the same blessedness.

4. The apostle closes the chapter with a clear and full account of the assured truth of the promises of God, ver. 13. *to the end.* They are all confirmed by the oath of God, and they are all founded in the eternal counsel of God, and therefore may be depended upon.

1. They

1. They are all confirmed by the oath of God. He has not only given his people his word, and his hand, and seal, but his oath. And here you will observe, 1. He instanteth in the oath of God to Abraham; which being sworn to him as the father of the faithful, remains in full force and virtue to all true believers. *When God made a promise unto Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself.* Observe, 1. What was the promise? *Surely, blessing, I will bless thee, and multiplying, I will multiply thee.* The blessing of God is the blessedness of his people; and those that he hath blessed indeed, he will go on to bless, and will multiply blessings, till he has brought them to perfect blessedness. 2. What was the oath by which this promise was ratified? *He swore by himself.* He staked down his own being, and his own blessedness upon it; no greater security can be given or desired. 3. How was that oath accomplished? Abraham, in due time, obtained the promise. It was made good to him after he had patiently endured. 1. There is always an interval, and sometimes a long one between the promise and the performance. 2. That interval is a trying time to believers, whether they have patience to endure to the end. 3. Those that patiently endure, shall assuredly obtain the blessedness promised, as sure as Abraham did. 4. The end and design of an oath, is to make the promise sure, and to encourage those to whom it is made, to wait with patience till the time for performance comes, *ver. 16.* An oath with men is for confirmation, and is an end of all strife. This is the nature and design of an oath, in which men swear by the greater, not by creatures, but by the Lord himself; and it is to put an end to all dispute about the matter, either to disputes within our own breasts, doubts and distrusts, or disputes with others, especially with the promiser. Now if God would condescend to take an oath to his people, he will surely remember the nature and design of it.

2. The promises of God are all founded in his eternal counsel; and this counsel of his is an immutable counsel. 1. The promise of blessedness which God has made to believers, is not a rash and hasty thing, but the result of God's eternal purpose. 2. That this purpose of God was agreed upon in counsel, and settled there between the eternal Father, Son, and Spirit. 3. These counsels of God can never be altered; it is immutable; God never needs to change his counsels; for nothing new can arise to him who sees the end from the beginning.

3. These promises of God, that are founded in the immutable counsel of God, and confirmed by the oath of God, may safely be depended upon, for here we have *two* immutable things, the counsel, and the oath of God, in which it is impossible for God to lie, contrary to his nature, as well as to his will. Here observe, (1.) Who they are to whom God has given such full security or happiness. 1. They are the heirs of the promise: Such as have a title to the promises by inheritance, by virtue of their new birth, and union with Christ. We are all by nature children of wrath. The curse is the inheritance we are born to; it is by a new and heavenly birth that any are born heirs to the promise. 2. They are such as have fled for refuge to the hope set before them. Under the law there were cities of refuge provided for those that were pursued by the avenger of blood. Here is a much better refuge prepared by the gospel, a refuge for all sinners that *can* have the heart to flee to it; yea, though they have been the chief of sinners.

(2.) What God's design towards them is in giving them such securities, that they might have strong consolation. Observe, 1. God is concerned for the consolation of believers, as well as for their sanctification; he would have his children walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. 2. The consolations of God are strong enough to support his people under their strongest trials. The comforts of this world are too weak to bear up the soul under temptation, persecution and death; but the consolations of the Lord are neither few nor faint.

3. What all the people of God should make of their hope and comfort, that most refreshing and comfortable hope of eternal blessedness that God has given them. Why this is, and must be unto them, *for as sure as the soul, fast and steadfast, &c. ver. 19.* Here, 1. We are in this world as a ship at sea, liable to be tossed up and down, and in danger of being cast away. Our souls are the vessels; the currents, and expectation, and graces, and happiness of our souls are the precious cargo, with which these vessels are laden; here on is the harbour to which we sail; the temptations, persecutions, and afflictions that we encounter, are the winds and waves that threaten our shipwreck. 2. We have need of an anchor to keep us sure and steady, or we are in continual danger. 3. Gospel hope is our anchor; as in our day of battle it is our helmet, so in our stormy passage through this world it is our anchor. 4. It is sure and steadfast, or else it could not keep us so. 1. It is sure in its own nature; for it is the special work of God in the soul, it is good hope through grace; it is not a flattering hope made out of the spider's web, but it is a true work of God, it is a strong and substantial thing. 2. It is steadfast as to its object; it is an anchor that has taken good hold, it enters into that which is within the veil, it is an anchor that is cast upon the rock, the rock of ages; it does not think to fasten in the sand, but *surely* within the veil, and fixes there upon Christ;

he is the object, he is the anchor-hold of the believer's hope. As an unseen glory within the veil, is what the believer is hoping for; so an unseen Jesus within the veil is the great foundation of his hope, the free grace of God, the merits and mediation of Christ, and the powerful influences of his Spirit, are the grounds of his hope, and so it is a steadfast hope. Jesus Christ is the object and ground of the believer's hope in several respects. 1. As he is entered within the veil to intercede with God in virtue of that sacrifice which he offered up without the veil, hope fastens upon his sacrifice and intercession. 2. As he is the forerunner of his people, gone within the veil to prepare a place for them, and to assure them that they shall follow him, he is the earnest and first-fruits of believers, both in his resurrection and ascension. 3. And he abides there an high priest after the order of Melchisedec; a priest for ever, whose priesthood shall never cease, never fail, till it has accomplished its whole work and design, which is the full and final happiness of all that have believed on Christ. Now this should engage us all to clear up our interest in Christ, that we may fix our hopes in him as our forerunner, that is entered thither for us, for our sakes, for our safety, to watch over our highest interests and concerns: And then let us love heaven the more on his account, and long to be there with him, where we shall be for ever safe, and for ever satisfied.

C H A P. VII.

*The doctrine of the priestly office of Christ is so excellent in itself, and so essential a part of the Christian faith, that the apostle loves to dwell upon it. Nothing made the Jews so fond of the Levitical dispensation as the high esteem they had of their priesthood, and it was doubtless a sacred and most excellent institution; it was a very severe threatening denounced against the Jews, *Hos. iii. 4.* That the children of Israel should abide many days without a prince or priest, and without a sacrifice, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Now the apostle assures them that by receiving the Lord Jesus, they would have a much better high priest, a priesthood of an higher order, and consequently a better dispensation or covenant, a better law and testament; this he shews in this chapter, where, 1. We have a more particular account of Melchisedec, *ver. 1, 2, 3.* 2. The excellency of his priesthood before that of Aaron, *ver. 4—11.* 3. An accommodation of all to Christ, to shew the superior excellency of his person, office and covenant, *ver. 11, to the end.**

1. **F**OR this Melchisedec king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him: 2. To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all: first being by interpretation king of righteousness, and after that also king of Salem, which is king of peace; 3. Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually.

The chapter foregoing ended with a repetition of what had been cited once and again before out of *Psal. cx. 4.* *Jesus an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.* Now this chapter is as a sermon upon that text; here the apostle sets before them some of the strong meat he had spoken of before, hoping they would by greater diligence be better prepared to digest it.

1. The great question that first offers itself is, who was this Melchisedec? All the account we have of him in the Old Testament is *Gen. xiv. 18, 19, &c.* and in *Psal. cx. 4.* Indeed we are much in the dark about him; God has thought fit to leave us so, that this Melchisedec might be a more lively type of him whose generation none can declare. If men will not be satisfied with what is revealed, they must rove about in the dark in endless conjectures, some fancying him to have been an angel, others the Holy Ghost; but the opinions concerning him, that are best worthy our consideration, are these three.

1. The rabbins, and most of the Jewish writers, think he was Shem the son of Noah, who was king and priest to those they descended from, after the manner of the other patriarchs; but it is not probable he should thus change his name; Besides, we have no account of his settling in the land of Canaan.

2. Many Christian writers have thought him to be Jesus Christ himself, appearing by a special dispensation and privilege to Abraham in the flesh, and who was known to Abraham by the name Melchisedec, which agrees very well to Christ, and to what is said, *John viii. 56.* *Abraham saw his day and rejoiced.* Much may

may be said for this opinion, and what is said in *ver.* 3. does not seem to agree with any meer man; but then it seems strange to make Christ a type of himself.

3. The most received opinion is, that he was a Canaanite king that reigned in Salem, and kept up religion and the worship of the true God; that he was raised to be a type of Christ, and was honoured by Abraham as such.

But we shall leave these conjectures, and labour to understand, as far as we can, what is here said of him by the apostle and how Christ is represented thereby, *ver.* 1, 2, 3.

1. Melchisedec was a king, and so is the Lord Jesus; a king of God's anointing; the government is laid upon his shoulders, and he rules over all for the good of his people.

2. That he was king of righteousness: His name signifies the righteous king. Jesus Christ is a rightful and a righteous king; rightful in his title, righteous in his government. He is the Lord our righteousness, he has fulfilled all righteousness, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, and he loves righteousness and righteous persons, and hates iniquity.

3. He was king of Salem, that is, king of peace; first king of righteousness, and after that also first king of peace. So is our Lord Jesus; he by his righteousness made peace; the fruit of righteousness is peace. Christ speaks peace, creates peace, he is our peace-maker.

4. He was priest of the most high God, qualified and anointed in an extraordinary manner to be his priest among the Gentiles. So is the Lord Jesus; he is the priest of the most high God, and the Gentiles must come to God by him; it is only through his priesthood that we can obtain reconciliation and remission of sin.

5. He was without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life, *ver.* 3. This must not be understood according to the letter, but the scripture has chosen to set him forth as an extraordinary person, without giving us his genealogy, that he might be a fitter type of Christ, who as man was without father, as God without mother; whose priesthood is without descent, did not descend to him from another, nor from him to another, but is personal and perpetual.

6. That he met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him. The story is recorded, *Gen.* xiv. 18. he brought forth bread and wine to refresh Abraham and his servants when they were weary; he gave as a king, and blessed as a priest. Thus our Lord Jesus meets his people in their spiritual conflicts, and refreshes them, and renews their strength, and blesses them.

7. That Abraham gave him a tenth part of all, *ver.* 2. i. e. as the apostle explains it, of all the spoils, and this Abraham did, either as an expression of his gratitude for what Melchisedec had done for him, or as a testimony of his homage and subjection to him as a king, or as an offering vowed and dedicated to God, to be presented by his priest. And thus are we obliged to make all possible returns of love and gratitude to the Lord Jesus for all the rich and royal favours we receive from him, and to pay our homage and subjection to him as our king, and to put all our offerings into his hands to be presented by him to the father in the incense of his own sacrifice.

8. And lastly, That this Melchisedec was made like unto the Son of God, and abideth a priest continually. He bore the image of God in his piety, and authority, and stands upon record as an immortal high priest; the ancient type of him who is the eternal and only begotten of the Father, who abideth a priest for ever.

4. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. 5. And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: 6. But he whose descent is not counted from them, received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. 7. And without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better. 8. And here men that die receive tithes: but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. 9. And as I may so say, Levi also who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. 10. For he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him.

2. Let us now consider (as the apostle advises) how great this Melchisedec was, and how far his priesthood was above that of the order of Aaron, *ver.* 4, 5, &c. Now consider how great this man was, &c. The greatness of this man and his priesthood appear,

1. From Abraham's paying the tenth of the spoils unto him; and it is well observed that Levi paid tithes to Melchisedec in No. cxiv.

Abraham, *ver.* 10. Now Levi received the office of the priesthood from God, and was to take tithes of the people, yet even Levi paid tithes to Melchisedec, as to a greater and higher priest than himself; therefore that high priest who should afterwards appear, of whom Melchisedec was a type, must be much superior to any of the Levitical priests, who paid tithes in Abraham to Melchisedec. And now by this argument of persons doing things, that are matters of right or injury in the loins of their predecessors, we have an illustration how we may be said to have sinned in Adam, and fallen with him in his first transgression. We were in Adam's loins, when he sinned, and that guilt and pravity that was contracted by the human nature, when it was in our first parents, is equitably imputed and derived to the same nature as it is in all other persons naturally descended from them. It justly adheres to the nature, and it must be by an act of grace if ever it be taken away.

2. From Melchisedec's blessing of Abraham, who had the promises, *ver.* 6, 7. And without contradiction, the less is blessed of the greater. Where, 1. Observe Abraham's great dignity and felicity that he had the promises. He was one in covenant with God, to whom God had given exceeding great and precious promises. That man is rich and happy indeed, that hath an estate in bills and bonds under God's own hand and seal. These promises are both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come; this honour have all those who receive the Lord Jesus, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. 2. Melchisedec's greater honour, in that it was his place and privilege to bless Abraham; and it is an uncontested maxim, that the less is blessed of the greater, *ver.* 7. He that gives the blessing is greater than he that receives it; and therefore Christ the antitype of Melchisedec, the meriter and mediator of all blessings to the children of men, must be greater than all the priests of the order of Aaron.

11. If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? 12. For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. 13. For he of whom these things are spoken, pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. 14. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood. 15. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, 16. Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. 17. For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. 18. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. 19. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. 20. And in as much as not without an oath he was made priest, 21. (For those priests were made without an oath: but this with an oath, by him that said unto him, The Lord sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec) 22. By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. 23. And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: 24. But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. 25. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. 26. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; 27. Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the peoples: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. 28. For the law maketh men high priests, which have infirmity; but the word of the oath which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

3. Observe the necessity there was of raising up another priest after the order of Melchisedec, and not after the order of Aaron, by whom that perfection should come, that could not come by the Levitical priesthood; which therefore must be changed, and

the whole œconomy with it, *ver. 11, 12, &c.* Here, 1. It is asserted, that perfection could not come by the Levitical priesthood and the law, they could not put those that came to them into the perfect enjoyment of the good things they pointed out unto them, they could only direct them to look farther, they could only shew them the way. 2. That therefore another priest must therefore be raised up after the order of Melchisedec, by whom, and his law of faith, perfection might come to all that obey him; and blessed be God that we may have perfect holiness and perfect happiness by Christ in the covenant of grace, according to the gospel, for we are complete in him. 3. It is asserted, that the priesthood being changed, there must of necessity be a change of the law, there being so near a relation between the priesthood and the law, the dispensation could not be the same under another priesthood; a new priesthood must be under a new regulation, managed in another way, and by rules proper to its nature and order. 4. It is not only asserted, but proved, that the priesthood and law are changed, *ver. 13, 14.* That priesthood and law by which perfection could not come, are abolished, and a priest is risen, and a dispensation now set up, by which true believers may be made perfect. Now that there is such a change is obvious.

1. In the tribe of which the priesthood comes, before it was the tribe of Levi; but our great high priest sprang out of Judah, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning the priesthood, *ver. 14.* This change of the family shews a real change of the law of priesthood.

2. In the form and order of making the priests, before in the Levitical priesthood, they were made after the law of a carnal commandment, but our present high priest was made after the power of an endless life. The former law appointed that the office should descend, upon the death of the father unto his eldest son, according to the order of carnal or natural generation; for none of the high priests under that law were without father or mother, or without descent, they had not life and immortality in themselves. They had both beginning of days, and end of life; and so the carnal commandment or law of primogeniture directed their succession, as it did in matters of civil right and inheritance. But the law by which Christ was constituted a priest after the order of Melchisedec, was the power of an endless life. That life and immortality which he had in himself, was his right and title to the priesthood, not his descent from former priests. This makes a great difference in the priesthood, and in the œconomy too, and gives the preference vastly to Christ and the gospel. The very law which constituted the Levitical priesthood, supposed the priests to be weak, frail, dying creatures, not able to preserve their own natural lives, but must be content and glad to survive in their posterity after the flesh; much less could they by any power or authority they had convey spiritual life and blessedness to those that came to them. But the high priest of our profession holds his office by that innate power of endless life, which he has in himself, not only to preserve himself alive, but to communicate spiritual and eternal life to all those that duly rely upon his sacrifice and intercession. Some think the law of the carnal commandment refers unto the external rites of consecration, and the carnal offerings that were made; but the power of an endless life, to the spiritual living sacrifices proper to the gospel, and the spiritual and eternal privileges, purchased by Christ, who was consecrated by the eternal Spirit of life that he received without measure.

3. There is a change in the efficacy of the priesthood, the former was weak and unprofitable, made nothing perfect; the latter brought in a better hope, by which we draw near to God, *ver. 18, 19.* The Levitical priesthood brought nothing to perfection; it could not justify mens persons from guilt; it could not sanctify them from inward pollution; it could not cleanse the consciences of the worshippers from dead works; all it could do, was to lead them to the antitype. But the priesthood of Christ carries in it, and brings along with it, a better hope; it shews us the true foundation of all that hope we have towards God for pardon and salvation; and it more clearly discovers the great objects of our hope; and so it tends to work in us a more strong and lively hope of acceptance with God. And by this hope we are encouraged to draw nigh unto God; to enter into a covenant union with him; to live a life of converse and communion with him. We may now draw near, with a true heart, and with the full assurance of faith, having our minds sprinkled from an evil conscience. The former priesthood rather kept men at a distance, and under a spirit of bondage.

4. There is a change in God's way of acting in this priesthood. He has taken an oath to Christ, which he never did to any of the order of Aaron. God never gave them any such assurance of their continuance, never engaged himself by oath or promise, that theirs should be an everlasting priesthood; and therefore gave them no reason to expect the perpetuity of it, but rather to look upon it as a temporary law. But Christ was made a priest with the oath of God; *the Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec,* *ver. 21.* Here God has upon oath declared the immutability, excellency, efficacy and eternity of the priesthood of Christ.

5. There is a change in that covenant, of which the priesthood was a security, and the priest a surety; that is, a change in the dispensation of that covenant. The gospel dispensation is more full, free, more perspicuous, more spiritual, and more efficacious than that of the law. Christ is in this gospel-covenant a surety for us to God, and for God to us, to see that the articles be performed on both parts. He as surely has tied the divine and human nature together in his own person, and therein given assurance of reconciliation; and he has as surely tied God and man together in the bond of the everlasting covenant. He pleads with men to keep their covenant with God, and he pleads with God that he will fulfil his promises to men, which he is always ready to do, in a way suitable to his majesty and glory, that is, through a mediator.

6. There is a remarkable change in the number of the priests under these different orders: In that of Aaron, there was a multitude of priests, of high priests, not at once, but successively; but in this of Christ there is but one and the same: The reason is plain, the Levitical priests were many, because *they were not suffered to continue by reason of death.* Their office, how high and honourable soever, could not secure them from dying; and as one died, another must succeed, and after a while must give place to a third, till the number was become very great. But this our high priest continues for ever, and his priesthood is *ἀπαρά-
βατον*, an unchangeable one, that does not pass from one to another, as the former did; it is always in the same hand; there can be no vacancy in this priesthood, no hour or moment, in which the people are without a priest to negotiate their spiritual concerns in heaven; such a vacancy might be very dangerous and prejudicial to them; but this is their safety and happiness, that this everliving high priest is able to save to the utmost, in all times, in all cases, in every juncture, all that come to God by him, *ver. 25.* So that here is a manifest alteration much for the better.

7. There is a remarkable difference in the moral qualifications of the priests; those that were of the order of Aaron, were not only mortal men, but sinful men, that had their sinful as well as natural infirmities; they needed to offer up sacrifices first for their own sins, and then for the people: But our high priest, who was consecrated by the word of the oath, needed only to offer up once for the people, never at all for himself; for he has not only an immutable consecration to his office, but an immutable sanctity in his person. He is *such an high priest as became us, holy, harmless and undefiled, &c.* *ver. 26, 27, 28.*

Here observe, 1. Our case as sinners needed an high priest to make satisfaction and intercession for us. 2. No priest could be suitable or sufficient for our reconciliation to God, but one that was perfectly righteous in his own person; he must be righteous in himself, or he could not be a propitiation for our sin, or our advocate with the Father. 3. That the Lord Jesus was exactly such an high priest as we wanted, for he has a personal holiness, absolutely perfect. And observe the description we have of the personal holiness of Christ expressed in various terms, and some learned divines think they all of them relate to his perfect purity.

1. He is holy, *i. e.* perfectly free from all the habits or principles of sin, not the least disposition to it in his nature; no sin dwells in him, though it does in the best of Christians, not the least sinful inclination.

2. He is harmless, *i. e.* perfectly free from all actual transgression, has done no violence, nor is there any deceit in his mouth, never did the least wrong to God or man.

3. He is undefiled, that is, was never accessory to other mens sins; the best of Christians have need to pray that God would forgive them their other mens sins. It is a difficult thing to keep our selves pure, so as not to partake in the guilt of other mens sins, by contributing some way towards them, or not doing what we ought to prevent them. Christ was undefiled; though he took upon him the guilt of our sins, yet he never involved himself in the fact and fault of them.

4. He is separate from sinners, not only in his present state, having entered as our high priest into the holiest of all, into which nothing defiled can enter; but in his personal purity he has no such union with sinners, either natural or federal, as can derive upon him original sin. This comes upon us by virtue of our natural and federal union with the first Adam, we descending from him in the ordinary way. But Christ was, by his ineffable conception in the virgin, separate from sinners; though he took a true human nature, yet the miraculous way in which it was conceived, set him upon a separate foot from all the rest of mankind.

5. He is made higher than the heavens. Most expositors understand this concerning his state of exaltation in heaven, at the right hand of God, to perfect the design of his priesthood. But Dr. Goodwin thinks this may be very justly referred to the personal holiness of Christ, that is greater and more perfect than the holiness of the hosts of heaven, that is, the holy angels themselves; who, though they are free from sin, yet are not in themselves free from all possibility of sinning. And therefore we read,

read, *God putteth no trust in his holy ones, and he chargeth his angels with folly*, Job. iv. 18. that is, with weakness, peccability. They may be angels one hour, and devils another, as many of them were; and that the holy angels shall not now fall, does not proceed from a defectibility of nature, but from the election of God; they are elect angels.

It is very likely this explanation of the words, *made higher than the heavens*, may be thought too much strained, and that it ought to be understood of the dignity of Christ's state, and not the perfect holiness of his person; and the rather because it is said he was made higher, *γενόμενος*; but it is well known that word is used in a neutral sense, as where it is said, *γενεθην ὁ Θεὸς ἀληθινός*, *Let God be true*.

The other characters in the verse plainly belong to the personal perfection of Christ in holiness, as opposed to the sinful infirmities of the Levitical priests; and it seems congruous to think this must do so too, if it may be fairly taken in such a sense; and it appears yet more probable, since the validity and prevalency of Christ's priesthood in *ver. 27.* is placed in the impartiality and disinterestedness of it: He needed not to offer up for himself, it was a disinterested mediation; he mediated for that mercy for others which he did not need for himself; had he needed it himself, he had been a party, and could not have been a mediator; a criminal, and could not have been an advocate for sinners. Now to render his mediation the more impartial and disinterested, it seems requisite not only that he had no present need of that favour for himself, which he mediated for in behalf of others, but that he never could stand in need of it. Though he needed it not to day, yet if he knew he might be in those circumstances as to need it to morrow, or in any future time, he must have been thought to have had some eye upon his own interest, and therefore could not act with that impartial regard and pure zeal for the honour of God on one hand; and that tender pure compassion for poor sinners on the other. I pretend not here to follow the notes of our late excellent expositor, into whose labours we have entered, but have taken the liberty to vindicate this notion of the learned Dr. Goodwin from the exceptions that I know have been made to it; and I have the rather done it, because if it will hold good, it gives us farther evidence how necessary it was that the mediator should be God, since no meer creature is of himself possessed of that impeccability which will set him above all possible need of favour and mercy for himself.

CHAP. VIII.

In this chapter the apostle pursues his former subject, the priesthood of Christ. And, 1. He sums up what he had already said, ver. 1, 2. 2. He sets before them the necessary parts of the priestly office, ver. 3, 4, 5. And, 3. Largely illustrates the excellency of the priesthood of Christ, by considering the excellency of that new dispensation of covenant for which Christ is the mediator, ver. 6. to the end.

1. **N**OW of the things which we have spoken, *this is the sum*: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; 2. A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.

1. Here is a summary recital of what had been said before concerning the excellency of Christ's priesthood, shewing both what we have in Christ, where he now resides, and what sanctuary he is the minister of. 1. What we have in Christ; we have an high priest, and such an high priest, as no other people ever had, no age of the world, or of the church, ever produced; all others were but types and shadows of this high priest. He is adequately fitted and absolutely sufficient to all the intents and purposes of an high priest, both with respect to the honour of God, and the happiness of men and himself; the great honour of all those that have an interest in him. 2. Where he now resides; *he is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty on high*, that is, of the glorious God of heaven. There the mediator is placed, and he is possessed of all authority and power both in heaven and upon earth; this is the reward of his humiliation; this authority he exerciseth for the glory of his Father, for his own honour, and for the happiness of all that belong to him, and he will by his almighty power bring every one of them in their own order, to the right hand of God in heaven, as members of his mystical body, that where he is, they may be also. 3. What is that *sanctuary*, of which he is a minister, *of the true tabernacle, which the Lord hath pitched, and not man*, ver. 2.

The tabernacle which was pitched by man, according to the appointment of God: There was an outer part, in which was the altar where they were to offer their sacrifices, and this typified Christ dying; and there was an interior part within the veil, which typified Christ interceding for the people in heaven. Now this tabernacle Christ never entered into, but having finished the work of satisfaction in the *true tabernacle* of his own body, he is now a minister of the sanctuary, the holy of holies, the true tabernacle in heaven, there taking care of his peoples affairs, interceding with God for them, that their sins may be pardoned, and their persons and services accepted through the merit of his sacrifice. He is not only in heaven enjoying great dominion and dignity, but, as the high priest of his church, executing this office for them all in general, and every member of the church in particular.

3. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore *it is* of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. 4. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: 5. Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God, when he was about to make the tabernacle. For see (saith he) *that* thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

Here the apostle sets before the Hebrews the necessary parts of Christ's priesthood, or what it was that belonged to that office, in conformity to what every high priest is ordained to. 1. Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices, whatever was brought by the people to be presented to God, whether expiatory sacrifices, or peace-offerings, or thank-offerings; these must be offered by the priest, who was to expiate their guilt by the blood of the sacrifice, and perfume their gifts and services by his holy incense, to render their persons and performances typically acceptable; so then it necessarily belongs to the priesthood of Christ, that he should have somewhat to offer; and he, as the antitype had himself to offer his human nature upon the altar of his divine nature, as the great atoning sacrifice that finished transgression, and made an end of sin once for all; and he hath the incense of his own righteousness and merits too, to offer with all that his people offer up to God by him, to render them acceptable. We must not dare to approach to God, or to present any thing to him but in and through Christ, depending upon his merits and mediation; for if we are accepted, it is in the beloved. 2. Christ must now execute his priesthood in heaven, in the holy of holies, the true tabernacle which the Lord hath fixed. Thus the type must be fully answered; having finished the work of sacrificing here, he must go into heaven to present his righteousness, and to make intercession there. For, 1. *If Christ were on earth, he should not be a priest*, ver. 4. that is, not according to the Levitical law, as not being of the line of that priesthood; and so long as that priesthood continued, there must be a strict regard had to the divine institution in every thing. 2. All the services of the priest, under the law, and every thing in that tabernacle which was framed according to the pattern in the mount, were only samplers and shadows of heavenly things, ver. 5. Christ is the substance and end of the law for righteousness. Something therefore there must be in Christ's priesthood that answers to the high priest's entering within the veil to make intercession, without which he could not have been a perfect priest; and what is that but the ascension of Christ into heaven, and his appearance there in the sight of God for his people, to present their prayers, and plead their cause? So that if he had still continued on earth, he could not have been a perfect priest; and an imperfect one he could not be.

6. But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. 7. For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. 8. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come (saith the Lord) when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: 9. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. 10. For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them

them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. 11. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. 12. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. 13. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away.

In this part of the chapter the apostle illustrates and confirms the superior excellency of the priesthood of Christ above that of Aaron, from the excellency of that covenant, or that dispensation of the covenant of grace, of which Christ was the mediator, *ver.* 6. his ministry is more excellent, by how much he is the mediator of a better covenant. The body and soul too of all divinity (as some observe) consist very much in rightly distinguishing between the two covenants, the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace, and between the two dispensations of the covenant of grace, that under the Old Testament, and that under the New. Now observe,

1. What is here said of the old covenant, or rather of the old dispensation of the covenant of grace; of this it is said, 1. That it was made with the fathers of the Jewish nation at mount Sinai, *ver.* 9. and Moses was the mediator of that covenant, when God took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, which speaks the great affection, condescension, and tender care of God towards them. 2. That this covenant was not found faultless, *ver.* 7, 8. it was a dispensation of darkness and dread tending to bondage, and only a school-master to bring us to Christ; it was perfect in its kind, and fitted to answer its end, but very imperfect in comparison of the gospel. 3. That it was not sure or steadfast; *for the Jews continued not in that covenant, and the Lord regarded them not,* *ver.* 9. They dealt ungratefully with their God, and cruelly with themselves, and fell under God's displeasure. God will regard those that remain in his covenant, but will reject those that cast away his yoke from them. 4. That it is decayed, grown old, and vanisheth away, *ver.* 13. it is antiquated, cancelled, out of date, of no more use in gospel times, than candles are when the sun is risen. Some think the covenant of peculiarity did not quite decay till the destruction of Jerusalem, though it was forfeited at the death of Christ, and was made old, and was now to vanish and perish, and the Levitical priesthood vanished with it.

2. What is here said of the New Testament dispensation, to prove the superior excellency of Christ's ministry. It is said, 1. That it is a better covenant, *ver.* 6. a more clear and comfortable dispensation and discovery of the grace of God to sinners, bringing in holy light and liberty to the soul; it is without fault, well ordered in all things; it requires nothing but what it promises grace to perform; it accepts of godly sincerity, accounting it gospel perfection; every transgression does not turn us out of covenant, all is put into a good and safe hand. 2. That it is established upon better promises, more clear and express, more spiritual, more absolute, the promises of spiritual and eternal blessings are in this covenant positive and absolute, the promises of temporal blessings with a wife and kind proviso, as far as shall be for God's glory and his people's good. This covenant contains in it promises of assistance and acceptance in duty, promises of progress and perseverance in grace and holiness, of bliss and glory in heaven, which were more obscurely shadowed forth by the promises of the land of Canaan, a type of heaven. 3. It is a new covenant, even that new covenant that God long ago declared he would make with the house of Israel, that is, all the Israel of God; this was promised in *Jer.* xxxi. 31, 32. and accomplished in Christ: This will always be a new covenant, in which all that truly take hold of it, shall be always found preserved by the power of God; it is God's covenant; his mercy, love, and grace moved for it; his wisdom devised it; his Son purchased it; his Spirit brings souls into it, and builds them up in it. 4. The articles of this covenant are very extraordinary, which are sealed between God and his people by baptism and the Lord's supper; whereby they bind themselves to their part, and God assures them he will do his part; and his is the main and principal part, on which his people depend for grace and strength to do theirs. Here,

1. God articles with his people, *that he will put his laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts,* *ver.* 10. He once wrote his laws to them, now he will write his laws in them; that is, he will give them understanding to know and to believe his laws. He will give them memories to retain them; he will give them hearts to love them, consciences to recognize them; he will give them courage to profess them, and power to put them in practice; the whole habit and frame of their souls shall be a table and transcript of the law of God. This is the foundation of the covenant; and when this is laid, duty will be

done wisely, sincerely, readily, easily, resolutely, constantly, and comfortably.

2. He articles with them to take them into a near and very honourable relation to himself. 1. He will be to them a God; *i. e.* he will be all that to them, and do all that for them, that God can be and do. Nothing more can be said in a thousand volumes, than is comprehended in these few words, *I will be a God to them.* 2. They shall be to him a people, to love, honour, observe, and obey him in all things; complying with his cautions, conforming to his commands, comporting with his providences, copying out his example, taking complacency in his favour. This those must do and will do, that have God for their God; this they are bound to do as their part of the contract; this they shall do, for God will enable them to do it, as an evidence that he is their God, and that they are his people; for it is God himself that first founds the relation, and then fills it up with grace suitable and sufficient, and helps them in their measure to fill it up with love and duty; so that God engages both for himself and themselves.

3. He articles with them, that they shall grow more and more acquainted with their God, *ver.* 11. *They shall all know me from the least to the greatest,* inasmuch as that there shall not be so much need of one neighbour teaching another the knowledge of God. Here observe, 1. That in the want of better instruction one neighbour should be teaching another to know the Lord, as they have ability and opportunity for it. 2. That this private instruction shall not be so necessary under the New Testament as under the Old. The old dispensation was shadowy, dark, ritual, and less understood, their priests preached but seldom, and but a few at a time, and the Spirit of God was more sparingly given out. But under the new dispensation there shall be such plenty of publick qualified preachers of the gospel, and dispensers of ordinances statedly in the solemn assemblies, and so great a flocking to them, as doves to their windows, and such a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of God to make the ministration of the gospel effectual, that there should be a mighty increase and spreading of Christian knowledge in persons of all sorts, of all sexes, and all ages. O that this promise might be fulfilled in our days, that the hand of God may be with his ministers, that a great number may believe, and be turned to the Lord!

4. God articles with them about the pardon of their sins, as what always accompanies the true knowledge of God, *ver.* 12. *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness,* &c. Observe, 1. The freeness of this pardon; it does not result from merit in man, but from mercy in God; he pardons for his own name-sake. 2. The fulness of this pardon; it extends to their unrighteousness, sins, and iniquities; to all kinds of sin, to sins highly aggravated. 3. The fixedness of this pardon; it is so final and so fixed, that God will remember their sins no more; he will not re-call his pardon; he will not only forgive their sins, but forget them; treat them as if he had forgot them. This pardoning mercy is connected with all other spiritual mercies; unpardoned sin prevents mercy, and pulls down judgments, but the pardon of sin prevents judgment, and opens a wide door to all spiritual blessing; it is the effect of that mercy that is from everlasting, and the earnest of that mercy that shall be to everlasting. This is the excellency of the new dispensation, and these the articles of it; and therefore we have no reason to repine, but great reason to rejoice that that former dispensation is antiquated and vanished away.

CHAP. IX.

*The apostle having declared the Old Testament dispensation antiquated and vanishing away, proceeds to let the Hebrews see the correspondence there was between the Old Testament and the New; and that whatever was excellent in the Old, was typical and representative of the New; which therefore must as far excel the Old, as the substance does the shadow. The Old Testament was never intended to be rested in, but to prepare for the institutions of the gospel. And here he treats, 1. Of the tabernacle, the place of worship, from *ver.* 1—6. 2. Of the worship and services performed in the tabernacle, *ver.* 6, 7. 3. Delivers the spiritual sense and the main design of all, *ver.* 8. to the end.*

1. **T**HEN verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. 2. For there was a tabernacle made, the first wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shew-bread; which is called the sanctuary. 3. And after the second vail, the tabernacle which

is called the holiest of all: 4. Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein *was* the golden pot that had manna, and Aarons rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; 5. And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat: of which we cannot now speak particularly.

1. The apostle gives an account here of the tabernacle, that place of worship, which God appointed to be pitched on earth; it is called a worldly sanctuary, wholly of this world, as to the materials of which it was built, and a building that must be taken down; is called a worldly sanctuary, because it was the court and palace of the king of Israel. God was their king, and, as other kings, had his court, or place of residence, and attendants, furniture and provision suitable thereto. This tabernacle, of which we have the model, *Exod. xxv. 26.* was a moving temple, shadowing forth the unsettled state of the church militant, and the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily. Now of this tabernacle it is said, 1. That it was divided into two parts, called a first and a second tabernacle, an inner and an outer part; representing the two states of the church militant and triumphant, and the two natures of Christ, human and divine. 2. We are told what was placed in each part of the tabernacle.

1. In the outer part: And there were several things, of which you have here a sort of schedule.

1. The candlestick, and doubtless not an empty and unlighted one, but where the lamps were always burning. And there was need of it, for there were no windows in the sanctuary; and this was to convince the Jews of the darkness and mysterious nature of that dispensation. Their light was only candle-light, in comparison of the fulness of light which Christ, the sun of righteousness, would bring along with him, and communicate to his people; for all our light is derived from him the fountain of light.

2. The table and the shew-bread set upon it. This table was set directly opposite to the candlestick, which shews, That by light from Christ we must have communion with him, and one with another. We must not come in the dark to his table, but by light from Christ must discern the Lord's body. On this table were placed twelve loaves for the twelve tribes of Israel; a loaf for a tribe, which stood from sabbath to sabbath, and on that day were renewed. This shew-bread may be considered either as the provision of the palace; though the king of Israel needed it not, yet in resemblance of the palaces of earthly kings, there must be this provision laid in weekly; or the provision made in Christ for the souls of his people, suitable to the wants and to the relief of their souls. He is the bread of life; in our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare; we may have fresh supplies from Christ, especially every Lord's day. This outer part is called the sanctuary or holy, because erected to the worship of a holy God, to represent a holy Jesus, and to entertain a holy people, for their farther improvement in holiness.

2. We have an account of what was in the inner part of the sanctuary, which was within the second veil, and is called the holiest of all. This second veil, which divided between the holy and the most holy place, was a type of the body of Christ; by the rending whereof not only a view but a way was opened for us into the holiest of all, the type of heaven itself. Now in this part were,

1. The golden censer, which was to hold the incense, or the golden altar set up to burn the incense upon; both the one and the other were typical of Christ, of his pleasing and prevailing intercession which he makes in heaven, grounded upon the merits and satisfaction of his sacrifice, upon which we are to depend for acceptance and the blessing from God.

2. The ark of the covenant overlaid round about with pure gold, *ver. 4.* This typified Christ and his perfect obedience to the law, and fulfilling all righteousness for us. Now here we are told both what was in this ark, and what was over it.

1. What was in it. 1. The golden pot that had manna, which when preserved by the Israelites in their own houses contrary to the command of God, presently putrefied and stank; but now being by God's appointment deposited here in his house, was kept from putrefaction, always pure and sweet; and this to teach us, that it is only in Christ that our persons, our graces, our performances are kept pure; it was also a type of that bread of life we have in Christ, the true ambrosia that gives immortality. This was also a memorial of God's miraculously feeding his people in the wilderness, that they might never forget such signal favour, nor distrust God for the time to come.

2. Aaron's rod that budded; and thereby shewed that God had chosen him of the tribe of Levi, to minister before him of all the tribes of Israel, and so an end was put to the murmuring of the people, and to their attempt to invade the priest's office, *Num. xvii.* This was that rod of God with which Moses and Aaron wrought such wonders; and this was a type of Christ

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who is styled the Man, the Branch, *Isa. xi. 1.* by whom God has wrought wonders for the spiritual deliverance, defence, and supply of his people, and for the destruction of their enemies. It was a type of divine justice, by whom Christ the Rock was smitten, and from whom the cool refreshing waters of life flow into our souls. 3. The tables of the covenant, in which the moral law was wrote, signifying the regard God hath to the preservation of his holy law, and the care we all ought to have, that we keep the law of God; that this we can only do in and through Christ, by strength from him, nor can our obedience be accepted but through him.

2. What was over the ark, *ver. 5.* Over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat.

1. The mercy-seat, which was the covering of the ark, it was called the propitiatory, and it was of pure gold, as long and as broad as the ark in which the tables of the law were laid; it was an eminent type of Christ, and of his perfect righteousness, ever adequate to the dimensions of the law of God, and covering all our transgressions, interposing between the Shechinah or symbol of God's presence, and our sinful failures, and covering them.

2. The cherubims of glory shadowing the mercy-seat, representing the holy angels of God, who take pleasure in looking into the great work of our redemption by Christ, and are ready to perform every good office under the Redeemer for those that are the heirs of salvation. The angels attended Christ at his birth, in his temptation, under his agonies, at his resurrection, and in his ascension, and will attend his second coming. God manifest in the flesh was seen, observed, visited by the angels.

6. Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God: 7. But into the second *went* the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people.

From the description of the place of worship in the Old Testament dispensation the apostle proceeds,

2. To speak of the duties and services performed in those places, *ver. 6.* When several parts and furniture of the tabernacle were thus settled, then what was to be done there? Why,

1. The ordinary priests went always into the first tabernacle to accomplish the service of God. Observe, 1. None but priests were to enter into the first part of the tabernacle, and this to teach us all, that persons not qualified, not called of God, must not intrude into the office and work of the ministry. 2. The ordinary priests were only to enter into the first part of the tabernacle, it would have been fatal presumption in them to have gone into the holiest of all; and this teaches us that even ministers themselves must know and keep in their proper stations, and not presume to usurp the prerogative of Christ, by offering up incense of their own, or adding their own inventions to the ordinances of Christ, or lording it over men's consciences. 3. That these ordinary priests were to enter into the first tabernacle always; that is, they were to devote themselves, and all their time, to the work of their office, and not alienate themselves at any time from it; and that they should be in an habitual readiness for the discharge of their office; and that at all stated appointed times they should actually attend to their work. 4. The ordinary priests must enter into the first tabernacle, that they might there accomplish the service of God; they must not do the work of God partially or by halves, but stand complete in the whole of his will and counsel; not only beginning well, but proceeding well, and persevering to the end, they fulfil the ministry they have received.

2. Into the second, the interior part, went the high priest alone, *ver. 7.* This part was an emblem of heaven, and Christ's ascension thither. Here observe, 1. None but the high priest must go into the holiest; so none but Christ could enter into heaven in his own name, and by his own right, and by his own merits. 2. In entering into the holiest, the high priest must first go through the outer sanctuary, and through the veil; signifying that Christ went to heaven through a holy life, and a violent death; the veil of his flesh was rent asunder. 3. That the high priest entered but once a year into the holiest, and in this the antitype excels the type, (as in every thing else) for he is entered once for all, during the whole dispensation of the gospel. 4. The high priest must not enter without blood; signifying that Christ having undertook to be our high priest, he could not have been admitted into heaven without shedding his blood for us; and that none of us can enter either into God's gracious presence here, or his glorious presence hereafter, but by the blood of Jesus. 5. That the high priest under the law entering into the holiest, offered up that blood for himself and

his own errors first, and then for the errors of the people, *ver. 7.* This teaches us that Christ is a more excellent person and high priest than any under the law, for he has no errors of his own to offer for. And it teaches us that ministers, when in the name of Christ they intercede for others, must first apply the blood of Christ to themselves for their pardon. 6. That when the legal high priest had offered for himself, he must not stop there, but must also offer for the errors of the people. Our high priest, though he needs not to offer for himself, yet he forgets not to offer for his people; he pleads the merit of his sufferings for the benefit of his people on earth. Observe, 1. Sins are errors, and great errors, both in judgment and practice. We greatly err when we sin against God, and who can understand all his errors? 2. They are such errors as leave guilt upon the conscience, not to be washed away but by the blood of Christ; and that the sinful errors of priests and people must be all done away by the same means, the application of the blood of Christ; we must plead this blood on earth, while he is pleading it in heaven for us.

8. The holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all, was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: 9. Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience, 10. Which stood only in meats, and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation. 11. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; 12. Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. 13. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; 14. How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

In these verses the apostle undertakes to deliver to us the mind and meaning of the Holy Ghost in all the ordinances of the tabernacle and legal oeconomy, both place and worship. The scriptures of the Old Testament are of inspiration of God; holy men of old spoke and wrote as the Holy Ghost directed them. And these Old Testament records are of great use and significance, not only to those that first received them, but even to Christians, who ought not to satisfy themselves to read the institutes of the Levitical law, but to learn what the Holy Ghost signifies and suggests to them thereby. Now here are several things mentioned, as the things that the Holy Ghost signified and certified to his people hereby.

1. That the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while the first tabernacle was standing, *ver. 8.* This was one lesson the Holy Ghost would teach us by these types; the way to heaven was not so clear and plain, nor so much frequented under the Old Testament as under the New. It is the honour of Christ and the gospel, and the happiness of those that live under it, that now life and immortality are brought to light: There was not that free access to God then as now; God has now opened a wider door, and there is room for more, yea even for as many as are truly willing to return unto him by Christ.

2. That the first tabernacle was only a figure for the time then present, *ver. 9.* It was a dark dispensation, and but of short continuance, only designed for a while to typify the great things of Christ and the gospel, that were in due time to shine forth in their own brightness, and thereby cause all the shadows to flee away, and disappear as the stars before the rising sun.

3. That none of the gifts and sacrifices there offered could make the offerers perfect as pertaining to conscience, *ver. 9.* That is, they could not take away either the desert, or defilement, or dominion of sin; they could not deliver conscience from a dread of the wrath of God; they could neither discharge the debts, nor resolve the doubts of him that did the service. A man might run through them all in their several orders and frequent returns, and continue to do so all his days, and yet neither find his conscience pacified nor purified by them; he might thereby be saved from corporal and temporal punishments that were threatened against the non-observers, but he could not be saved by them from sin or hell, as all those are that believe in Christ.

4. The Holy Ghost hereby signifies that the Old Testament institutions were but external carnal ordinances imposed upon them until the time of reformation, *ver. 10.* Their imperfection lay in three things. 1. Their nature; they were but external and carnal meats and drinks, and divers washings. All these were bodily exercises which profit little; they could only satisfy the flesh, or at best sanctify to the purifying of the flesh. 2. That they were not such as were left indifferent to them to use or disuse, but they were imposed upon them by grievous corporal punishments, and this was ordered on purpose to make them look more to the promised seed, and long more for him. 3. That these were never designed for a perpetuity, but only to continue till the time of reformation, till the better things provided for them were actually bestowed upon them. Gospel times are and should be times of reformation, of clearer light as to all things necessary to be known, of greater love, bearing ill-will to none, and good-will to all, and having complacency in all that are like unto God; of greater liberty and freedom both of spirit and speech, and of a more holy living according to the rule of the gospel. We have far greater advantages under the gospel, than they had under the law; and we must either be better, or we shall be worse than they; a conversation becoming the gospel, is an excellent way of living; nothing mean, or foolish, or vain, or servile becomes the gospel.

5. The Holy Ghost signifies to us hereby, that we never make the right use of types but when we apply them to the antitype; and whenever they do so, it will be very evident that the antitype (as in reason it should) does greatly excel the type, which is the main drift and design of all that is said. And as he writes to those that believed that Christ was come, and that Jesus was the Christ; so he very justly infers that he is infinitely above all the legal high priests, *ver. 11, 12.* and he illustrates it very fully. For,

1. Christ is the high priest of good things to come, by which may be understood, 1. All the good things that were to come during the Old Testament, and now are come under the New. All the spiritual and eternal blessings the Old Testament saints had in their day and under their dispensation, were owing to the Messiah to come, on whom they believed. The Old Testament set forth in shadows what was to come, the New Testament is the accomplishment of the Old. 2. All the good things yet to come and to be enjoyed in a gospel-state, when the promises and prophecies made to the gospel-church in the latter days shall be accomplished; all these depend upon Christ and his priesthood, and shall be fulfilled. 3. Of all the good things to come in the heavenly state, which will perfect both the Testaments, as the state of glory will perfect the state of grace, this state will be in a much higher sense the perfection of the New Testament, than the New Testament was the perfection of the Old. Observe, all good things past, present and to come, were and are founded upon, and flowing from, the priestly office of Christ.

2. Christ is an high priest by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, &c. *ver. 11.* a tabernacle not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building, i. e. his own body, or rather human nature, conceived by the Holy Ghost overshadowing the blessed virgin. This was a new fabrick, a new order of building infinitely superior to all earthly structures, not excepting the tabernacle or the temple itself.

3. Christ our high priest is entered into heaven, not as their high priest entered into the holiest, with the blood of bulls and of goats, but by his own blood typified by theirs, and infinitely more precious. And this,

4. Not for one year only, which shewed the imperfection of that priesthood, that it did but typically obtain a year's reprieve or pardon. But our high priest entered in heaven once for all, and has obtained not a yearly respite but eternal redemption, and so needs not to make an annual entrance. In each of the types there was something that shewed it was a type, and resembled the antitype, and something that shewed it was but a type, and fell short of the antitype, and therefore ought by no means to be set up in competition with the antitype.

5. The Holy Ghost farther signified and shewed what was the efficacy of the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices, and from thence infers the much greater efficacy of the blood of Christ. 1. The efficacy of the blood of the legal sacrifices extended to the purifying of the flesh, *ver. 13.* it freed the outward man from ceremonial uncleanness, and from temporal punishment, and intitled to and fitted for some external privileges. 2. He infers very justly from hence the far greater efficacy of the blood of Christ, *ver. 14.* how much more shall the blood of Christ, &c. Here observe,

1. What it was that gave such efficacy to the blood of Christ. 1. It was his offering himself to God, the human nature upon the altar of his divine nature, he being both priest, altar, and sacrifice; his divine nature serving for the two first, and his human nature for the last; now such a priest, altar, and sacrifice could not but be propitiatory. 2. It was Christ's offering up himself to God through the eternal Spirit, not only as the divine nature supported the

the human, but the Holy Ghost, which he had without measure, helping him in all, and in this great act of obedience offering himself. 3. It was Christ's offering himself to God *without spot*, without any sinful stain either in his nature or life; this was conformable to the law of sacrifices, which were to be without blemish. Now farther observe,

2. What the efficacy of Christ's blood is; it is very great. For, 1. It is sufficient to purge the conscience from dead works, it reaches to the very soul and conscience; the defiled soul, defiled with sin, which is a dead work, proceeds from spiritual death, and tends to death eternal. As the touching a dead body gave a legal uncleanness, so meddling with sin gives a moral and real defilement, fixes it in the very soul; but the blood of grace has that efficacy as to purge it out. 2. It is sufficient to enable us to serve the living God, not only by purging away that guilt, that separates between God and sinners, but by sanctifying and renewing the soul through the gracious influences of the holy Spirit purchased by Christ for this purpose, that we might be enabled to serve the living God in a lively manner.

15. And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. 16. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. 17. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all whilst the testator liveth. 18. Whereupon, neither the first testament was dedicated without blood. 19. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, 20. Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. 21. Moreover, he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. 22. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

In these verses the apostle considers the gospel under the notion of a will or testament, the new or last will and testament of Christ, and shews the necessity and efficacy of the blood of Christ to make this testament valid and effectual.

1. The gospel is here considered as a testament, the new and last will and testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is observable that the solemn transactions that pass between God and man are sometimes called a covenant, here a testament. A covenant is an agreement between two or more parties about things that are in their own power, or may be so; and this either with or without a mediator; and this agreement takes effect at such time and in such manner as is therein declared. A testament is a voluntary act and deed of a single person duly executed and witnessed, bestowing legacies on such legatees as are described and characterised by the testator, and which can only take effect upon his death. Now observe,

1. Christ is the mediator of a new testament, *ver. 15.* and he is so for several ends and purposes here mentioned. 1. To redeem persons from their transgressions committed against the law or first testament, which makes every transgression a forfeiture of liberty, and makes men debtors, and slaves or prisoners, that need to be redeemed. 2. To qualify all those that are effectually called, to receive the promise of an eternal inheritance. These are the great legacies that Christ by his last will and testament has bequeathed to the true characterised legatees.

2. To make this new testament effectual, it was necessary that Christ should die; the legacies accrue by means of death. This he proves by two arguments. 1. From the general nature of every will or testamentary disposition, *ver. 16.* Where a testament is, where it acts and operates, there must of necessity be the death of the testator; till then the property is still in the testator's hand, and he has power to revoke and cancel, or alter his will as he pleases; so that no estate, no right is conveyed by will, till the testator's death hath made it unalterable and effectual.

2. From the particular method that was taken by Moses in the ratification of the first testament, which was not done without blood, *ver. 18, 19, &c.* All men by sin were become guilty before God, had forfeited their inheritance, their liberties, and their very lives into the hands of divine justice, but God being willing to shew the greatness of his mercy, proclaimed a covenant

of grace, and ordered it to be typically administered under the Old Testament, but not without the blood and life of the creature; and God accepted the blood of bulls and goats, as typifying the blood of Christ; and by these means the covenant of grace was ratified under the former dispensation. The method taken by Moses according to the direction he had received from God, is here particularly related.

1. Moses spoke every precept to all the people according to the law, *ver. 19.* He published to them the tenor of the covenant; both the duties required, the rewards promised to those that did their duty, and the punishment threatened against the transgressors, and he called for their consent to the terms of the covenant; and this in an express manner.

2. Then he took the blood of calves, and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and applied this blood by sprinkling it. This blood and water signified the blood and water that came out of our Saviour's pierced side, for justification and sanctification, and also shadowing forth the two sacraments of the New Testament, Baptism and the Lord's Supper, with scarlet wool, signifying the righteousness of Christ with which we must be clothed; the hyssop, signifying that faith by which we must apply all. Now with these Moses sprinkled, 1. The book of the law and covenant, to shew that the covenant of grace is confirmed by the blood of Christ, and made effectual to our good. 2. The people, intimating that the shedding of the blood of Christ will be no advantage to us, if it be not applied to us. And the sprinkling of both the book and the people, signified the mutual consent of both parties, God and man, and their mutual engagements to each other in this covenant through Christ; Moses at the same time using these words, *This is the blood of the Testament which God hath enjoined unto you.* This blood typifying the blood of Christ, is the ratification of the covenant of grace to all true believers. 3. He sprinkled the tabernacle and all the utensils of it, intimating, that all the sacrifices offered up, and services performed there were accepted only through the blood of Christ, which procures the remission of that iniquity that cleaves to our holy things, which could not have been remitted but by that atoning blood.

23. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: 25. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entreth into the holy place, every year with blood of others: 26. (For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world) but now once in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: 28. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.

In this last part of the chapter the apostle goes on to tell us, what the Holy Ghost has signified to us by the legal purifications of the patterns of the things in heaven; inferring from thence the necessity of better sacrifices to consecrate the heavenly things themselves.

1. The necessity of purifying the patterns of the things in heaven, *ver. 23.* This necessity arises both from the divine appointment, which must always be obeyed, and from the reason of that appointment, which was to preserve a proper resemblance between the things typifying and the things typified. It is observable here, that the sanctuary of God on earth is a pattern of heaven, and communion with God in his sanctuary is to his people a heaven upon earth.

2. The necessity that the heavenly things themselves should be purified with better sacrifices, than of bulls and goats; the things themselves are better than the patterns, and must therefore be consecrated with better sacrifices: These heavenly things are the privileges of the gospel-state, begun in grace, perfected in glory; these must be ratified by a suitable sanction or consecration; and that was the blood of Christ. Now it is very evident that the sacrifices of Christ are vastly better than those of the law. 1. From the places in which the sacrifices under the law, and those under the gospel were offered: Those under the law was the holy place made with hands, which are but figures of the true sanctuary, *ver. 24.* Christ's sacrifice, though offered upon earth, was by himself carried up into heaven, and is there presented in a way of daily intercession; for he appears in the presence of God for us. He is gone to heaven

not only to enjoy the rest, and receive the honour due to him, but to appear in the presence of God for us, to present our persons and our performances, to answer and rebuke our adversary and accuser, to secure our interest, to perfect all our affairs, and to prepare a place for us. 2. From the sacrifices themselves, *ver.* 26. Those under the law were the lives and blood of other creatures of a different nature from the offerers: The blood of beasts a thing of small value, and would have been of none at all in this matter, had it not had a typical respect to the blood of Christ; but the sacrifice of Christ was the oblation of himself; he offered his own blood, truly called, by virtue of the hypostatical union, the blood of God; and therefore of infinite value. 3. From the frequent repetition of the legal sacrifices. This shewed the imperfection of that law; but it is the honour and perfection of Christ's sacrifice, that it being once offered, was sufficient to all the ends of it; and indeed it would have been absurd; for then he must have been still dying and rising again, and ascending, and then again descending and dying, &c. and the great work had been always *in fieri*, always a-doing, and always to do, but never finished; which would be as contrary to reason as it is to revelation, and to the dignity of his person; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. The gospel is the last dispensation of the grace of God to men. 4. From the inefficacy of the legal sacrifice, and the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, the legal sacrifices could not of themselves put away sin; neither procure pardon for it, nor power against it. Sin would still have lain upon us, and had dominion over us, but Jesus Christ by one sacrifice, had made an end of sin; he has destroyed the works of the devil.

3. The apostle illustrates the argument from the appointment of God concerning men, *ver.* 27, 28. And observes something like it in the appointment of God concerning Christ.

1. The appointment of God concerning men, contains in it two things. 1. That they must once die, or however undergo a change equivalent to death. It is an awful thing to die, to have the vital knot loosed or cut asunder, all relations here dropt at once, an end put to our probation and preparation state, to enter into another world. It is a great work, and it is a work that can be but once done, and therefore had need to be well done. This is matter of comfort to the godly, that they shall die well, and die but once; but it is matter of terror to the wicked, that die in their sins, that they cannot return again to do that great work better. 2. It is appointed to men, that after death they shall come to judgment, to a particular judgment immediately after death; for the soul returns to God as to its judge, to be determined to its eternal state; and men shall be brought to the general judgment at the end of the world. This is the unalterable decree of God, concerning men, they must die, and they must be judged: It is appointed for them, and it is to be believed and seriously considered by them.

2. The appointment of God concerning Christ, bearing some resemblance to the other. 1. He must be once offered to bear the sins of many, of all the Father had given to him, of all that should believe in his name: He was not offered for any sin of his own, he was wounded for our transgressions. God laid on him the iniquity of all his people; and these are many, though not so many as the rest of mankind; yet when they are all gathered to him, he will be the first-born among many brethren. 2. It is appointed that Christ shall appear the second time without sin, to the salvation of those that look for him. 1. He will then appear without sin, at his first appearance, though he had no sin of his own, yet he stood charged with the sins of many; he was the Lamb of God that bore upon him the sins of the world; and then he appeared in the form of sinful flesh: But his second appearance will be without any such charge upon him, he having fully discharged it before, and then his visage shall not be marred, but shall be exceeding glorious. 2. This will be to the salvation of all that look for him, he will then perfect their holiness, their happiness; their number shall then be accomplished, and their salvation completed. Observe, It is the distinguishing character of true believers that they are looking for Christ; they look to him by faith; they look for him by hope and holy desires. They look for him in every duty, in every ordinance, in every providence now; and they expect his second coming, and are preparing for it; and though it will be sudden destruction to the rest of the world, that scoff at the report of it, it will be eternal salvation to those that look for it.

C H A P. X.

The apostle knew very well the Hebrews, to whom he wrote, were strangely fond of the Levitical dispensation, and therefore he fills his mouth with arguments to wean them from it; and in order thereto proceeds in this chapter, 1. To run down and lay low the whole of that priesthood and sacrifice, ver. 1—7. 2. He raises and exalts the priesthood of Christ very high, that he might effectually recommend him and his gospel to them, ver. 7—19. 3. He shews to believers the honours and dignities of their state, and calls them to suitable duties, ver. 19, to the end.

1. **F**OR the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. 2. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged, should have had no more conscience of sins. 3. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. 4. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. 5. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me: 6. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure:

Here the apostle, by the direction of the Spirit of God, sets himself to run down and lay low the Levitical dispensation; for though it was of divine appointment, and very excellent and useful in its time and place; yet when it was set up in competition with Christ, to whom it was only designed to lead the people, it was very proper and necessary to shew the weakness and imperfection of it, which the apostle does effectually from several arguments. As,

1. That the law had a shadow, and but a shadow of good things to come; and who would dote upon a shadow, though of good things, especially when the substance is come? Observe, 1. The things of Christ and the gospel are good things; they are the best things; they are best in themselves, and the best for us: They are realities of an excellent nature. 2. These good things were under the Old Testament good things to come, nor clearly discovered, nor fully enjoyed. 3. That the Jews then had but the shadow of the good things of Christ, some adumbrations of them; we under the gospel have the substance.

2. That the law was not the very image of the good things to come. An image is an exact draught of the thing represented thereby: The law did not go so far, but was only a shadow, as the image of a person in a looking-glass is a much more perfect representation than his shadow upon the wall. The law was a very rough draught of the great design of divine grace, and therefore not to be so much doated on.

3. The legal sacrifices being offered year by year, could never make the comers thereunto perfect; for then there would have been an end of offering them, *ver.* 1, 2. Could they have satisfied the demands of justice, and made reconciliation for iniquity; could they have purified and pacified conscience, then they had ceased, as being no farther necessary; since the offerers would have had no more sin lying upon their consciences. But this was not the case, after one day of atonement was over, the sinner would fall again into one fault or other, and so there would be need of another day of atonement, and of one every year besides the daily ministrations. Whereas now under the gospel, the atonement is perfect, and not to be repeated; and the sinner once pardoned, is ever pardoned as to his state, and only needs to renew his repentance and faith, that he may have a comfortable sense of a continued pardon.

4. As the legal sacrifices did not of themselves take away sin, so it was impossible they should, *ver.* 4. There was an essential defect in them. 1. They were not of the same nature with us that sinned. 2. They were not of sufficient value to make satisfaction for the affronts done to the justice and government of God, as they were not of the same nature that offended, and so could not be suitable: They were much less of the same nature that was offended, and nothing less than the nature that was offended, could make the sacrifice a full satisfaction for

for the offence. 3. The beasts offered up under the law could not consent to put themselves in the sinner's room and place. The atoning sacrifice must be one capable of consenting, and must voluntarily substitute himself in the sinner's stead: Christ did so.

5. There was a time fixed and foretold by the great God; and that time was now come when these legal sacrifices would be no longer accepted by him, or useful to men. God never did desire them for themselves, and now he abrogated them; and therefore to adhere to them now, would be resisting God, and rejecting him. This time of the repeal of the Levitical laws was foretold by David, *Psal. xl. 7.* and is recited here as now come. Thus industriously does the apostle lay low the Mosaical dispensation.

7. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God. 8. Above, when he said, Sacrifice, and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offering for sin thou wouldst not, neither hadst pleasure therein, (which are offered by the law;) 9. Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. 10. By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: 12. But this man after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; 13. From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. 14. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. 15. Whereof the holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, 16. This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them: 17. And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. 18. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

Here the apostle raiseth up and exalteth the Lord Jesus Christ, as high, as he had laid the Levitical priesthood low. He recommends Christ to them as the true high-priest, the true atoning sacrifice, the antitype of all the rest: And this he illustrates,

1. From the purpose and promise of God concerning Christ, which is frequently recorded in the volume of the book of God, *ver. 7.* God had not only decreed, but declared by Moses and the prophets, that Christ should come and be the great high-priest of the church, and should offer up a perfect, and a perfecting sacrifice. It was written of Christ in the beginning of the book of God, that *the seed of the woman should break the serpent's head*; and the Old Testament abounds with prophecies concerning Christ. Now since he is the person so often promised, so much spoken of, so long expected by the people of God, he ought to be received with great honour and gratitude.

2. From what God had done in preparing a body for Christ, that is an human nature, that he might be qualified to be our redeemer and advocate; uniting the two natures in his own person, he was a fit mediator to go between God and man; a day's-man to lay his hand upon both, a peace-maker to reconcile them, and an everlasting band of union between God and the creature: As *Psal. xl. 6. Mine ears hast thou opened*, i. e. thou hast fully instructed me, furnished and fitted me for the work, and engaged me in it. Now a Saviour thus provided and prepared by God himself in so extraordinary a manner, ought to be received with great affection and gladness.

3. From that readiness and willingness that Christ discovered to engage in this work, when no other sacrifice would be accepted, *ver. 7, 8, 9.* When no lesser sacrifice would be a proper satisfaction to the justice of God, than that of Christ himself, then Christ voluntarily came in to it. *Lo, I come! I delight to do thy will, O God!* Let thy curse fall upon me, but let these go their way: Father, I delight to fulfil thy counsels, and my covenant with thee for them; I delight to perform all thy promises, to fulfil all the prophecies. This should endear Christ and our Bibles to us, that in Christ we have the fulfilling of the scriptures.

4. From the errand and design upon which Christ came; and that was to do the will of God, not only as a prophet to reveal the will of God, nor only as a king to give forth

divine laws, but as a priest to satisfy the demands of justice, and to fulfil all righteousness. Christ came to do the will of God in two instances. 1. In taking away the first priesthood, which God had no pleasure in; not only taking away the curse of the covenant of works, and cancelling the sentence denounced against us as sinners, but taking away the insufficient typical priesthood, and blotting out the hand-writing of ceremonial ordinances, and nailing it to his cross. 2. In establishing the second, that is, his own priesthood and the everlasting gospel, the most pure and perfect dispensation of the covenant of grace; this is the great design upon which the heart of God was set from all eternity. The will of God centers and terminates in it; and it is not more agreeable to the will of God, than it is advantageous to the souls of men; *for it is by this will that we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all, ver. 10.* Observe, 1. What is the fountain of all that Christ has done for his people, the sovereign will and grace of God. 2. How we come to partake of what Christ has done for us, and that is, by being sanctified, converted, effectually called, wherein we are united to Christ, and so partake of the benefits of his redemption; and this sanctification is owing to that oblation he made of himself to God.

5. From the perfect efficacy of the priesthood of Christ, *ver. 14.* By one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified; he has and will perfectly deliver those that are brought over to him, from all the guilt, and power, and punishment of sin, and will put them into the sure possession of perfect holiness and felicity. This is what the Levitical priesthood could never do; and if we indeed are aiming at a perfect state, we must receive the Lord Jesus as the only high priest that can bring us to that state.

6. From the place to which our Lord Jesus is now exalted, the honour he has there, and the farther honour he shall have, *ver. 12, 13. This man after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever sat down at the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.* Here observe, 1. To what honour Christ, as man and mediator, is exalted, to the right hand of God, the seat of power, and interest, and activity. The giving hand, all the favours that God bestows on his people are handed to them by Christ; the receiving hand, all the duties that God accepts from men are presented by Christ; the working hand, all the kingdoms of providence and grace, is administered by Christ; and therefore this is the highest post of honour. 2. How did Christ come to this honour? Not merely by the purpose or donation of the Father, but by his own merit and purchase, as a reward due to his sufferings; and as he can never be deprived of an honour so much his due, so he will never quit it, nor cease to employ it for his peoples good. 3. How does he enjoy this honour, even with the greatest satisfaction and rest; he is for ever sat down there. The Father acquiesces and is satisfied in him; he is satisfied in his Father's will and presence; this is his rest for ever; here he will dwell: for he has both desired and deserved it. 4. He has farther expectations which shall not be disappointed; for they are grounded upon the promise of the Father, who hath said unto him, *Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool, Psal. cx. 1.* One would think such a person as Christ could have no enemies except in hell; but it is certain he has enemies on earth, and very many, and very inveterate ones. Let not Christians then wonder that they have enemies, though they desire to live peaceably with all men. But Christ's enemies shall be made his footstool; some by conversion, others by confusion; and which way soever it be, Christ will be honoured; of this Christ is assured; and this he is expecting; and his people should rejoice in the expectation of it; for when his enemies are subdued, their enemies that are so for his sake shall be subdued also.

7. And lastly, The apostle recommends Christ from the witness the Holy Ghost has given in the scriptures concerning him, and this relates chiefly to what should be the happy fruit and consequence of his humiliation and sufferings, which in general is that new and gracious covenant that is founded upon his satisfaction, and sealed by his blood, *ver. 15. whereof the Holy Ghost is a witness, &c.* The passage is cited from *Jer. xxxi. 31.* in which covenant God promises, 1. That God would pour out his Spirit upon his people, so as to give them skill, and will, and power to obey his word; he will put his laws in their hearts, and write them in their minds, *ver. 16.* This will make their duty plain, easy, and pleasant. 2. Their sins and iniquities he will remember no more, *ver. 17.* which will alone shew the riches of divine grace, and the sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction, that it needs not to be repeated, *ver. 18.* For there shall be no more remembrance of sin against true believers, either to shame them now, or to condemn them hereafter. This was much more than the Levitical priesthood and sacrifices could effect.

And now we have gone through the doctrinal part of the epistle, in which we have met with many things dark and difficult to be understood, which we must impute to the weakness and dulness of our own minds. The apostle now proceeds to apply this great doctrine, so as to influence their affections, and direct their practice, setting before them the dignities and duties of the gospel state.

19. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, 20. By a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21. And *having* an high priest over the house of God: 22. Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. 23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering (for he is faithful that promised) 24. And let us consider one another to provoke unto love, and to good works: 25. Not forsaking the assembling of our selves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more as ye see the day approaching. 26. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, 27. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. 28. He that despised Moses law, died without mercy, under two or three witnesses: 29. Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? 30. For we know him that hath said, Vengeance *belongeth* unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. 31. *It is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. 32. But call to remembrance the former days, in which after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions: 33. Partly whilst ye were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used. 34. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in your selves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance. 35. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. 36. For ye have need of patience; that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. 37. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. 38. Now the just shall live by faith: but if *any man* draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. 39. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe, to the saving of the soul.

Here the apostle sets forth,

1. The dignities of the gospel state. It is fit that believers should know the honours and privileges that Christ has procured them, that while they take the comfort, they may give him the glory of all. The privileges are, 1. Boldness to enter into the holiest. They have access to God, light to direct them, liberty of spirit and of speech to conform to the direction; they have a right to the privilege, and a readiness for it; assistance to use and improve it, and assurance of acceptance and advantage. They may enter into the gracious presence of God in his holy oracles, ordinances, providences, and covenant, and so into communion with God, where they receive communications from him, till they are prepared to enter into his glorious presence in heaven. 2. An high priest over the house of God, even this blessed Jesus, who presides over the church militant and every member thereof on earth, and over the church triumphant in heaven. God is willing to dwell with men on earth, and to have them dwell with him in heaven; but fallen man cannot dwell with God without an high priest,

who is the mediator of reconciliation here, and of fruition hereafter.

2. The apostle tells us the way and means by which Christians enjoy such privileges, and in general declares it to be by the blood of Jesus, by the merit of that blood which he offered up to God as an atoning sacrifice: he has purchased for all that believe in him free access to God in the ordinances of his grace here, and in the kingdom of his glory. This blood being sprinkled on the conscience, chafes away slavish fear, and gives the believer assurance both of his safety and welcome into the divine presence. Now the apostle having given this general account of the way by which we have access to God, he enters farther into the particulars of it, *ver.* 20. As, 1. It is the only way; there is no other left but this; the first way to the tree of life is and has been long shut up. 2. It is a new way both in opposition to the covenant of works, and to the antiquated dispensation of the Old Testament; it is *via novissima*, the last way that will ever be opened to men; they that will not enter in this way, exclude themselves for ever; it is a way that will always be effectual. 3. It is a living way. It would be death to attempt to come to God in the way of the covenant of works; but this way we may come to God and live. It is by a living Saviour, who, though he was dead, is alive; and it is a way that gives life and lively hope to those that enter into it. 4. It is a way that Christ has consecrated for us through the veil, that is, his flesh. The veil in the tabernacle and temple signified the body of Christ; when he died, the veil of the temple was rent in sunder, and this was at the time of the evening sacrifice, and gave the people a surprising view into the holy of holies, which they never had before. Our way to heaven is by a crucified Saviour; his death is to us the way of life; to those that believe this he will be precious.

3. The apostle proceeds to shew the Hebrews the duties, which they were obliged to upon the account of these privileges conferred upon them in such an extraordinary way, *ver.* 22, 23, &c.

1. They must draw near to God, and that in a right manner. They must draw near to God, since such a way of access and return to God is opened; it would be the greatest ingratitude and contempt of God and Christ still to keep at a distance from him. They must draw near by conversion and by taking hold of his covenant; they must draw near in all holy conversation like Enoch walking with God; they must draw near in humble adorations, worshipping at his footstool; they must draw near in holy dependence, and in a strict observation of the divine conduct towards them; they must draw near in conformity to God, and communion with him, living under his blessed influence, still endeavouring to get nearer and nearer, till they come to dwell in his presence; but they must see to it, that they make their approach to God after a right manner. 1. With a true heart, without any allowed guile or hypocrisy. God is the searcher of hearts, and he requires truth in the inward parts. Sincerity is our gospel perfection, though not our justifying righteousness. 2. In full assurance of faith; with a faith grown up to a full persuasion that when we come to God by Christ, we shall have audience and acceptance. We should lay aside all sinful distrust; without faith we cannot please God; and the stronger our faith is, the more glory we give to God. And, 3. Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience by a believing application of the blood of Christ to our souls. They may be cleansed from guilt, from filth, from sinful fear and torment, from all aversion to God and duty, from ignorance, and error, and superstition, and whatever evils the consciences of men are subject to by reason of sin. 4. Our bodies washed with pure water, *i. e.* with the water of baptism, by which we are recorded among the disciples of Christ, members of his mystical body, or with the sanctifying virtue of the holy Spirit reforming and regulating our outward conversation as well as our inward frame; cleansing from the filthiness of the flesh, as well as of the spirit. The priests under the law were to wash, before they went into the presence of the Lord to offer before him. There must be a due preparation for making our approaches to God.

2. The apostle exhorts believers to hold fast the profession of their faith, *ver.* 23. where we observe, 1. The duty itself, to hold fast the profession of our faith, *i. e.* to be well apprised in all the truths and ways of the gospel; to get fast hold of them, and to keep that hold against all temptation and opposition. Our spiritual enemies will do what they can to wrest our faith, and hope, and holiness, and comfort, out of our hands, but we must hold fast our religion as our best treasure. 2. The manner how we must do this, without wavering, without doubting, without disputing, without dallying with temptation to apostasy. Having once settled these great things between God and our souls, we must be steadfast and immovable. They that begin to waver in matters of Christian faith and practice, are in danger of falling away. 3. The motive or reason enforcing this

this duty; he is faithful that hath promised. God has made great and precious promises to believers, and he is a faithful God, true to his word; there is no falseness or fickleness with him, and there should be none with us; his faithfulness should excite and encourage us to be faithful, and we must depend more upon his promises to us, than upon our promises made with him, and we must plead with him the promise of grace sufficient.

4. We have the means prescribed for preventing our apostasy, and promoting our fidelity and perseverance, *ver. 24, 25, &c.* He mentions several, as,

1. That we should consider one another *to provoke to love and to good works*. Christians ought to have a tender consideration and concern for one another; they should affectionately consider what their several wants, and weaknesses, and temptations are, and they should do this not to reproach one another, not to provoke one another to anger, but to love and good works, calling upon ourselves and one another, to love God and Christ more; to love duty and holiness more; to love our brethren in Christ more, and to do all the good offices of Christian affection both to the bodies and souls of each other. A good example given to others is the best and most effectual provocation to love and good works.

2. *Not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together*, *ver. 25*. It is the will of Christ that his disciples should assemble themselves together, sometimes more privately for conference and prayer, and in publick for hearing and joining in all the ordinances of gospel worship. There were in the apostles times, and should be in every age, Christian assemblies for the worship of God, and for mutual edification. And it seems even in those times there were some that forsook these assemblies, and so begun to apostatize from religion itself. The communion of saints is a great help and privilege, and a good means of steadiness and perseverance; hereby their hearts and hands are mutually strengthened.

3. To exhort one another, to exhort ourselves and each other, to warn ourselves and one another of the sin and danger of backsliding, to put ourselves and our fellow Christians in mind of our duty, of our failures and corruptions, to watch over one another, and be jealous of ourselves and one another with a godly jealousy. This managed with a true gospel spirit, would be the best and most cordial friendship.

4. That we should observe the approaching of times of trial, and be thereby quickened to greater diligence, so much the more as ye see the day approaching. Christians ought to observe the signs of the times, such as God has foretold them of. There was a day approaching, a terrible day to the Jewish nation, when their city should be destroyed, and the body of the people rejected of God for rejecting Christ. This would be a day of dispersion and temptation to the chosen remnant. Now the apostle puts them upon observing what signs there were of the approach of such a terrible day, and be the more constant in meeting together and exhorting one another, that they might be the better prepared for such a day. There is a trying day coming on us all, the day of our death, and we should observe all the signs of its approaching, and improve them to greater watchfulness and diligence in duty.

5. After having mentioned these means of establishment, the apostle proceeds, in the close of the chapter, to enforce his exhortations to perseverance, and against apostasy, by many very weighty considerations, *ver. 26, 27, &c.*

1. From the description he gives of the sin of apostasy. It is *sinning wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth*. Sinning wilfully against that truth, we have had convincing evidence of. This text has been the occasion of great distress to some gracious souls, they have been ready to conclude that every wilful sin after conviction, and against knowledge is the unpardonable sin: But this has been their infirmity and error. The sin here mentioned is a total and final apostasy, when men with a full and fixed will and resolution despise and reject Christ the only Saviour; despise and resist the Spirit, the only sanctifier; and despise and renounce the gospel, the only way of salvation, and the words of eternal life; and all this after they have known, owned, and professed the Christian religion, and continue to do so obstinately and maliciously. This is the great transgression the apostle seems to refer to the law concerning presumptuous sinners, *Numb. xv. 30, 31*. They were to be cut off.

2. From the dreadful doom of such apostates. 1. There remains no more sacrifice for such sins; no other Christ to come to save such; they sin against the last resort and remedy. There were some sins under the law, for which no sacrifices were provided: But yet if they that committed them did truly repent, though they must not escape temporal death, they might escape eternal destruction; for Christ would come and make atonement. But now those under the gospel that will not accept of Christ, that they may be saved by him, have no other refuge left them. 2. There remains only for them

a certain fearful looking for of judgment, *ver. 27*. Some think this refers to the dreadful destruction of the Jewish church and state, but certainly it refers also to the utter destruction that waits for all obstinate apostates at death and judgment, when the judge will discover a fiery indignation against them that will devour the adversaries: They will be consigned over to the devouring fire, and to everlasting burnings. Of this destruction God gives some notorious sinners, while on earth, a fearful foreboding in their own consciences; a dreadful looking for it; with a despair of ever being able either to endure or escape it.

3. From the methods of divine justice with those that despised Moses's law, *i. e.* sinned presumptuously, despising his authority, his threatenings and power. These, when convicted, by two or three witnesses, were put to death; they died without mercy, a temporal death. Observe, Wise governors should be careful to keep up the credit of their government, and the authority of the laws by punishing presumptuous offenders: But then in such cases there should be good evidence of the fact. Thus God ordained in Moses's law; and from hence the apostle infers the heavy doom that will fall upon those that apostatize from Christ: And here he refers himself to their own consciences, to judge how much sorer punishment the despisers of Christ (after they have professed to know him) are like to undergo; and they may judge of the greatness of the punishment by the greatness of the sin.

1. They have trodden under foot the Son of God. To trample upon an ordinary person shews intolerable insolence; to treat a person of honour in that vile manner, is insufferable: But to deal thus with the Son of God, who himself is God, must be the highest provocation: To trample upon his person, denying him to be the Messiah; to trample upon his authority, and undermine his kingdom; to trample upon his members as the off-scouring of all things, and not fit to live in the world, what punishment can be too great for such men?

2. They have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing. The blood of Christ, with which the covenant was purchased and sealed, and wherewith Christ himself was consecrated, or wherewith the apostate was sanctified, that is baptized, visibly initiated into the new covenant by baptism, and admitted to the Lord's supper. Observe, There is a kind of sanctification which persons may partake of, and yet fall away: They may be distinguished by common gifts and graces; by an outward profession; by a form of godliness; a course of duties, and a set of privileges, and yet fall away finally. Men that have seemed before to have the blood of Christ in high esteem, may come to account it an unholy thing, no better than the blood of a malefactor, though it was the world's ransom, and every drop of it of infinite value.

3. They have done despite unto the Spirit of grace; the Spirit that is graciously given to men, and that works grace wherever it is; the Spirit of grace, that should be regarded and attended to with the greatest care: This Spirit they have grieved, resisted, quenched; yea, done despite to him, which is the highest act of wickedness, and makes the case of the sinner desperate; refusing to have the gospel salvation applied to him. Now he leaves it to the consciences of all, appeals to universal reason and equity, whether such aggravated crimes ought not to receive a suitable punishment, a sorer punishment than they had that died without mercy? But what punishment can be sorer, than to die without mercy? I answer, to die by mercy, by that mercy and grace which they have despised, how dreadful is the case, when not only the justice of God, but his abused grace and mercy call for vengeance?

4. From the description we have in the scripture of the nature of God's vindictive justice, *ver. 30*. we know that he has said, Vengeance is mine, *&c.* This is taken out of *Psal. xciv. 1*. Vengeance belongs unto me; the terrors of the Lord are known both by revelation and reason. Vindictive justice is a glorious, though terrible attribute of God; it belongs to him, and he will use and execute it upon the heads of such sinners as despise his grace; he will avenge himself, and his Son, and Spirit, and covenant, upon apostates. And how dreadful then will their case be? The other quotation is from *Deut. xxxii. 36*. The Lord will judge his people; he will search and try his visible church, and will discover and detect those that say they are Jews, but are not; he will make them of the synagogue of Satan, and separate the precious from the vile, and will punish the sinners in Zion with the greatest severity. Now they that know him who hath said, *Vengeance belongeth to me, I will recompense*, must needs conclude, as the apostle doe, *ver. 31*. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*; they that know the joy that results from the favour of God, can thereby judge of the power and dread of his vindictive wrath.

Observe here what will be the eternal misery of impenitent sinners and apostates; they shall fall into the hands of the living God: Their punishment shall come from God's own hand; he takes them into the hand of his justice; he will deal with them himself; their greatest misery will be the immediate impressions of divine wrath on the soul. When he punishes them by creatures, the instrument abates something of the force of the blow; but when he does it by his own hand, it is infinite misery. This they shall have at God's hand; they shall lie down in sorrow; their destruction shall come from his glorious powerful presence; when they make their woful bed in hell, they will find that God is there, and his presence will be their greatest terror and torment. And he is a living God; he lives for ever, and will punish for ever.

5. He presses them to perseverance, by putting them in mind of their former sufferings for Christ, *ver. 32. But call to mind the former days, in which after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions.* In the early days of the gospel, there was a very hot persecution raised up against the professors of the Christian religion, and the believing Hebrews had their share of it; he would have them to remember,

1. When they had suffered; in former days after they were illuminated; that is, as soon as God had breathed life into their souls, and caused divine light to spring up in their minds, and taken them into his favour and covenant; then earth and hell combined all their force against them. Here observe a natural state is a dark state, and those that continue in that state meet with no disturbance from Satan and the world; but a state of grace is a state of light, and therefore the powers of darkness will violently oppose it. They that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution.

2. What they suffered; they endured a great fight of affliction; many and various afflictions united together against them, and they had a great conflict with them: Many are the troubles of the righteous. 1. They were afflicted in themselves. In their own persons they were made gazing-stocks, spectacles to the world, angels and men, *1 Cor. iv. 9.* In their names and reputation, *ver. 33.* By many reproaches Christians ought to value their reputation; and they do so especially because the reputation of religion is concerned: This makes reproach a great affliction; they were afflicted in their estates, by the spoiling of their goods, by fines and forfeitures. 2. They were afflicted in the afflictions of their brethren; partly while ye became companions of those that were so used. The Christian spirit is a sympathizing spirit, not a selfish spirit, but a compassionate spirit; it makes every Christian's suffering our own, puts us upon pitying them, visiting them, helping them, and pleading for them. Christians are one body, animated by one Spirit, embarked in one common cause and interest, and are the children of that God who is afflicted in all the afflictions of his people. If one member of the body suffers, all the rest suffer with it: And the apostle takes particular notice how they had sympathized with him, *ver. 34. Ye had compassion on me in my bonds.* We must thankfully acknowledge the compassions our Christian friends have shewed for us under our afflictions.

3. How they had suffered. They had been mightily supported under their former sufferings; they took their sufferings patiently, and not only so, but joyfully received from God as a favour and honour conferred upon them, that they should be thought worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Christ. God can strengthen his suffering people with all might in the inner man, to all patience and long-suffering, and that with joyfulness, *Col. i. 11.*

4. What it was that enabled them thus to bear up under their sufferings. They knew in themselves that they had in heaven a better and a more enduring substance. Observe, 1. The happiness of the saints in heaven is substance, something of real weight and worth: All things here are but shadows. 2. It is a better substance than any thing they can have or lose here. 3. It is an enduring substance, it will outlive time, and run parallel with eternity; they can never spend it; their enemies can never take it from them as they did their earthly goods. 4. This will make a rich amends for all they can lose and suffer here. In heaven they shall have a better life, a better estate, better liberty, better society, better hearts, better work, every thing better. 5. That Christians should know this in themselves, they should get the assurance of it in themselves: The Spirit of God witnessing with their spirits, for the assured knowledge of this will help them to endure any fight of afflictions they may be encountered with in this world.

6. He presses them to persevere from that recompence of reward that waited for all faithful Christians: *ver. 35. Cast not away therefore your confidence which hath great recompence*

of reward. Where, 1. He exhorts them not to cast away their confidence, that is their holy courage and boldness, but to hold fast that profession for which they had suffered so much before, and born those sufferings so well. 2. He encourages them to this by assuring them that the reward of their holy confidence would be very great; it carries a present reward in it, in holy peace and joy, and much of God's presence and his power visiting upon them; and it shall have a great recompence of reward hereafter. 3. Shews them how necessary a grace the grace of patience is in our present state, *ver. 36. Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise;* that is, this promised reward. Observe, The greatest part of the saints happiness is in promise; that they must first do the will of God before they receive the promise, and that after they have done the will of God, they have need of patience to wait for the time when the promise shall be fulfilled; they have need of patience to live, till God calls them away. It is a trial of the patience of Christians to be content to live after their work is done, and to stay for the reward till God's time to give it them is come. We must be God's waiting servants, when we can be no longer his working servants; they that have had and exercised much patience already, must have and exercise more till they die. 4. To help their patience, he assures them of the near approach of Christ's coming to deliver and to reward them; *ver. 37. For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry.* He will soon come to them at death, and put an end to all their sufferings, and give them a crown of life. He will soon come to judgment, and put an end to the sufferings of the whole church, (all his mystical body) and gives them an ample and glorious reward in the most publick manner. There is an appointed time for both, and beyond that time he will not tarry, *Hab. ii. 3.* The Christian's present conflict may be sharp, but it will be soon over.

7. And lastly, He presses them to perseverance by telling them that this is the distinguishing character, and will be the happiness; whereas apostasy is the reproach, and will be the ruin of all that are guilty of it, *ver. 38, 39. Now the just shall live by faith, &c.* 1. It is the honourable character of just men, that in times of the greatest afflictions, they can live by faith; they can live upon the assured persuasion they have of the truth of God's promises. Faith puts life and vigour into them; they can trust God, and live upon him, and wait his time; and as their faith maintains their spiritual life now, it should be crowned with eternal life hereafter. 2. That apostasy is the mark of the brand of those in whom God takes no pleasure; and it is a cause of God's severe displeasure and anger. God never was pleased with the formal profession, and external duties and services of such as do not persevere; he saw the hypocrisy of their hearts then; and he is greatly provoked when their formality in religion ends in an open apostasy from religion; he beholds them with great displeasure; they are an offence to him. 3. The apostle concludes with declaring his good concerning himself and these Hebrews, that they should not forfeit the character and happiness of the just, and fall under the brand and misery of the wicked, *ver. 39. But we are not, &c. q. d. I hope we are not of them who draw back.* I hope you and I, who have met with great trials already, and have been supported under them by the grace of God strengthening our faith, shall not be at any time left to ourselves, to draw back to perdition; but that God will still keep us by his mighty power through faith unto salvation. Observe, 1. Professors may go a great way, and after all draw back; and that drawing back from God is drawing on to perdition: The farther we depart from God, the nearer we approach to ruin. 2. Those that have been kept faithful in great trials for the time past, have reason to hope, that the same grace shall be sufficient to help them still to live by faith, till they receive the end of their faith and patience; even the salvation of their souls: If we live by faith, and die in faith, our souls are safe for ever.



C H A P. XI.

The apostle having in the close of the foregoing chapter recommended the grace of faith, and a life of faith as the best preservative against apostasy; he now enlarges upon the nature and fruits of this excellent grace. 1. The nature of it, and the honour it reflects upon all that live in the exercise of it, ver. 1, 2, 3. 2. The great examples we have in the Old Testament of those that lived by faith, and did, and suffered extraordinary things by the strength of this grace, from the 4th to the 39th verse. And, 3. The advantages that we have in the gospel for the exercise of this grace above what they had that lived in the times of the Old Testament, ver. 39, 40.

1. **N**OW faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. 2. For by it the elders obtained a good report. 3. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Here we have, 1. A definition or description of the grace of faith in two parts. 1. *It is the substance of things hoped for.* Faith and hope go together; and the same things that are the object of our hope, are the object of our faith. It is a firm persuasion and expectation, that God will perform all that he has promised to us in Christ; and this persuasion is so strong, that it gives the soul a kind of possession and present fruition of those things; gives them a subsistence in the soul, by the first-fruits and foretastes of them: So that believers in the exercise of faith *are filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.* Christ dwells in the soul by faith, and the soul is filled with the fulness of God, as far as his present measure will admit; he experiences a substantial reality in the objects of faith. 2. *It is the evidence of things not seen.* Faith demonstrates to the eye of the mind the reality of those things that cannot be discerned by the eye of the body. Faith is the firm assent of the soul to the divine revelation, and every part of it, and sets to its seal that God is true. It is a full approbation of all that God has revealed, as holy, just, and good, and it helps the soul to make application of all to itself with suitable affections and endeavours, and so it is designed to serve the believer instead of sight, and to be to the soul all that the senses are to the body: That faith is but opinion, or fancy, that does not realize invisible things to the soul, and excite the soul to act agreeable to the nature and importance of them.

2. An account of the honour it reflects upon all those that have lived in the exercise of it, *ver. 2. By it the elders obtained a good report*; the ancient believers that lived in the first ages of the world. Observe, 1. That true faith is an old grace, and has the best plea to antiquity: It is not a new invention, a modern fancy; it is a grace that has been planted in the soul of man ever since the covenant of grace was published in the world; and it has been practised from the beginning of the revelation; the eldest and best men that ever were in the world were believers. 2. That their faith was their honour; it reflected honour upon them; they were an honour to their faith, and their faith was an honour to them; it put them upon doing *the things that were of good report*, and God has taken care that a record shall be kept, and report made, of the excellent things they did in the strength of this grace: The genuine actings of faith will bear to be reported, and deserve to be reported, and will, when reported, redound to the honour of true believers.

3. We have here one of the first acts and articles of faith, which has a great influence on all the rest, and which is common to all believers in every age and part of the world, and that is the creation of *the worlds by the word of God*, not out of pre-existent matter, but out of nothing, *ver. 3.* The grace of faith has a retrospect, as well as prospect; it looks not only forward to the end of the world, but back to the beginning of the world: By faith we understand much more of the formation of the world, than ever could be understood by the naked eye of natural reason: Faith is not a force upon the understanding, but a friend and a help to it. Now what does faith give us to understand concerning *the worlds*, that is, the upper, middle, and lower regions of the universe? 1. *That these worlds were not eternal, nor did they produce themselves, but they were made by another.* 2. *That the maker of the worlds is God*; he is *the maker of all things*; and, whoever is so, must be God. 3. *That he made the world with great exactness*; it was a *framed work*, in every thing duly adapted and disposed to answer its end, and to express the perfections of the Creator. 4. *That God made the world by his word*, that is, by his essential wisdom, and eternal Son, and by his active will, saying, *Let it be done, and it was done*, Psalm xxxiii. 9. 5. *That the world was thus framed out of nothing, out of no pre-existent matter, contrary to the received maxim, that out of nothing nothing can be made*; which, though true of created power, can have no place with God, who can call *things that are not as if they were*, and command them into being. These things we understand by faith. The Bible gives us the truest and most exact ac-

count of the origin of all things, and we are to believe it, and not to wrest or run down the scripture account of the creation, because it does not suit with some fantastical hypotheses of our own, which has been in some learned, but conceited men, the first remarkable step towards infidelity, and has led them into many more.

4. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness, that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead, yet speaketh. 5. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6. But without faith *it is impossible to please him*: for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. 7. By faith Noah being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. 8. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out not knowing whither he went. 9. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. 10. For he looked for a city which hath foundations: whose builder and maker is God. 11. Through faith also Sarah her self received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. 12. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, *so many* as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea-shore innumerable. 13. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14. For they that say such things, declare plainly that they seek a country. 15. And truly if they had been mindful of that *country*, from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned: 16. But now they desire a better *country*, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. 17. By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son: 18. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19. Accounting that God was able to raise *him* up, even from the dead; in whence also he received him in a figure.

The apostle having given us a more general account of the grace of faith, now proceeds to set before us some illustrious examples of it in the Old Testament times, and these may be divided into two classes: 1. Those whose names are not only mentioned, but the particular exercise and actings of their faith specified. 2. Those whose names are barely mentioned, and an account given in general of the exploits of their faith, which it is left to the reader to accommodate, and apply to the particular persons, from what he gathers up in the sacred story.

1. Those whose names are not only mentioned, but the particular trials and actings of their faith subjoined; and in these verses are included the several instances from Abel to Isaac.

1. The leading instance and example of faith here recorded is that of Abel. It is observable, the Spirit of God has not thought fit to say any thing here of the faith of our first parents; and yet the church of God has generally, by a pious charity, taken it for granted that God gave them repentance and faith in the promised seed; that he instructed them in the mystery of sacrificing, and that they instructed their children in it, and that they found mercy with God, after they had ruined themselves, and all their posterity: But God has left the matter still under some doubt, as a warning to all that have great talents given to them, and a great trust reposed in them, that they do not prove unfaithful, since God would not inroll our first parents among the number of believers in this blessed calendar.

It begins with Abel, one of the first saints, and the first martyr for religion of all the sons of Adam, one that lived *by faith*, and died for it, and therefore a fit pattern for the Hebrews to imitate.

Observe, 1. What Abel did *by faith*, *he offered up a more excellent sacrifice than Cain*, a more full and perfect sacrifice, *πλεονεξία*. Hence learn, 1. That, after the fall, God opened a new way for the children of men to return to him in religious worship.

This is one of the first instances that is upon record of fallen men going in to worship God, and it was a wonder of mercy that all intercourse between God and man was not cut off by the fall. 2. That, after the fall, God must be worshipped by sacrifices, a way of worship which carries in it a confession of sin, and of the desert of sin, and a profession of faith in a Redeemer, who was to be a ransom for the souls of men. 3. That, from the beginning of this kind, there has been a remarkable difference between the worshippers; here were two persons, brethren, both go in to worship God, and yet there was a vast difference; Cain was the elder brother, but Abel has the preference: It is not seniority of birth, but grace, that makes men truly honourable. The difference is observable in both their persons; Abel was an upright person, a righteous man, a true believer; Cain was a formalist, had not a principle of special grace; and in their principles, Abel acted under the power of faith, Cain only from the force of education, or natural conscience; and there was a very observable difference in their offerings; Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement, *brought of the firstlings of the flock*, acknowledging himself to be a sinner that deserved to die, and only hoped for mercy through *the great sacrifice*; Cain brought only a sacrifice of acknowledgment, a meer thank-offering, *the fruit of the ground*, which might, and, perhaps, must, have been offered in innocency; here was no confession of sin, no regard to the ransom; this was an essential defect in Cain's offering. There will always be a difference between those that worship the true God; some will compass him about with lyes, others will be faithful with the saints; some, like the Pharisee, will lean to their own righteousness, others, like the publican, will confess their sin, and cast themselves upon the mercy of God in Christ.

2. What Abel gained by his faith, the original record in *Gen. iv. 4. God had respect to Abel, and to his offering*; first to his person as gracious, then to his offering, as proceeding from grace, especially from *the grace of faith*. In this place we are told, that *he obtained by his faith some special advantages*; as, 1. *Witness that he was righteous*, a justified, sanctified, and accepted person; this, very probably, was attested by *fire from heaven, kindling, and consuming his sacrifice*. 2. *God gave witness to the righteousness of his person*, by testifying his acceptance of his gifts: When the fire, an emblem of God's justice, accepted the offering, it was a sign that the mercy of God accepted the offer, for the sake of *the great sacrifice*. 3. *By it he being dead, yet speaketh*: He had the honour to leave behind him an instructive, speaking case; and what does it speak to us? what should we learn from it? 1. That fallen man has leave to go in to worship God with hope of acceptance. 2. That, if our persons and offerings be accepted, it must be through faith in the Messiah. 3. That acceptance with God is a peculiar and distinguishing favour. 4. That those, who obtain this favour from God, must expect the envy and malice of the world. 5. That God will not suffer the injuries done to his people to remain unpunished, nor their sufferings unrewarded. These are very good and useful instructions, and yet *the blood of sprinkling speaketh better things than that of Abel*. 6. That God would not suffer Abel's faith to die with him, but would raise up others, that should obtain like precious faith; and so he did in a little time; for in the next verse we read,

2. *Of the faith of Enosh, ver. 5. He is the second of those elders, that, through faith, have obtained a good report*: And, first, what is here reported of him? Why, in this place, and in *Gen. v. 6. c.* we read, 1. *That he walked with God*, i. e. that he was really, eminently, actively, progressively, and perseveringly religious in his conformity to God, communion with God, and complacency in God. 2. *That he was translated that he should not see death*, nor any part of him be found upon earth; for God took him, soul and body, into heaven, as he will do those of the saints that shall be found alive at his second coming. 3. *That before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God*. He had the evidence of it in his own conscience, and *the Spirit of God witnessed with his spirit*. Those that, *by faith, walk with God* in a sinful world, are pleasing to him, and he will give them marks of his favour, and put honour upon them.

2. What is here said of his faith? *ver. 6. Why it is said, that without this faith it is impossible to please God, without such a faith as helps us to walk with God, an active faith, and that we cannot come to God, unless we believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those that diligently seek him*. 1. *He must believe that God is*, and that he is what he is, what he has revealed himself to be in the scripture, i. e. a being of infinite perfections, subsisting in those persons, Father, Son, and holy Ghost. Observe, The practical belief of the existence of God, as revealed in the word, would be a powerful awe-band upon our souls, a bridle of restraint to keep us from sin, and a spur of constraint to put us upon all manner of gospel obedience.

2. *That he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*. Here observe, 1. By the fall we have lost God; we have lost the divine light, life, love, likeness, and communion. 2. God is again to be found of us through Christ, *the second Adam*. 3. God has prescribed means and ways wherein he may be found; to wit, a strict attention to his oracles, attendance on his ordinances, and ministers duly discharging their office, and associating with his people, observing his providential conduct, and, in all things, humbly

waiting for his gracious presence. 4. They that would find God in these ways of his, must *seek him diligently*; they must seek early, earnestly, and perseveringly; *then shall they seek him, and find him, if they seek him with all their heart*; and when once they have found him, as their reconciled God, they will never repent the pains they have spent in seeking after him.

3. *The faith of Noah, ver. 7. Observe, 1. The ground of Noah's faith, and that was a warning he had received from God of things as yet not seen*; he had a divine revelation, whether by voice or vision does not appear; but it was such as carried in it its own evidence; he was *forewarned of things not seen as yet*, that is, of a great and severe judgment, such as the world had never yet seen, and of which, in the course of second causes, there was not yet the least sign: This secret warning he was to communicate to the world, who would be sure both to despise him, and his message. God usually warns sinners before he strikes him, and where his warnings are slighted, the blow will fall the heavier. 2. The actings of Noah's faith, and the influence it had both upon his mind and practice. (1.) Upon his mind; it impressed his soul with a fear of God's judgments; he was proved *with fear*: Faith first influences our affections, then our actions; and faith works upon these affections that are suitable to the matter revealed: If it be some good thing, faith stirs up love and desire; if some evil thing, faith stirs up fear. (2.) His faith influenced his practice; his fear thus excited by believing God's threatening, moved him to *prepare an ark*, in which, no doubt, he met with the scorns and reproaches of a wicked generation: He did not dispute with God why he should make an ark, nor how it could be capable of containing what was to be lodged in it, nor how such a vessel could possibly weather out so great a storm: His Father silenced all objections, and set him to work in earnest. 3. The blessed fruits and rewards of Noah's faith: 1. Hereby himself, and *his house*, were saved, when a whole world of sinners were perishing about them: God saved his family for his sake; it was well for them that they were Noah's sons and daughters; it was well for those women that they married into Noah's family; perhaps, they might have married to great estates in other families, but then they had been drowned. We use to say, it is good to be a-kin to an estate; but surely it is good to be a-kin to the covenant. 2. Hereby he judged and *condemned the world*; his holy fear condemned their security, and vain confidence; his faith condemned their unbelief; his obedience their contempt and rebellion: Good examples will either convert sinners, or condemn them: There is something very convincing in a life of strict holiness, and regard to God; it commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God, and they are judged by it. This is the best way the people of God can take to condemn the wicked; not by harsh and censorious language, but by an holy, exemplary conversation. 3. Hereby *he became an heir of the righteousness which is by faith*. 1. He was possessed of a true justifying righteousness; he was *heir to it*: And, 2. This his right of inheritance was through faith in Christ, as *a member of Christ, a child of God, and if a child, then an heir*: His righteousness was relative, resulting from his adoption, through faith in *the promised seed*. As ever we expect to be justified and saved in *the great and terrible day of the Lord*, let us now prepare an ark, secure an interest in Christ, and in *the ark of the covenant*, and do it speedily, before the door be shut, for *there is not salvation in any other*.

4. *The faith of Abraham, the friend of God, and father of the faithful*, in whom the Hebrews boasted, and from whom they derived their pedigree and privileges; and therefore the apostle, that he might both please and profit them, enlarges more upon the heroick achievements of Abraham's faith, than any other of the patriarchs, and, in the midst of his account of *the faith of Abraham*, he inserts the story of *Sarah's faith, whose daughters those women are that continue to do well*. Observe,

1. The ground of Abraham's faith; and that was the call and promise of God, *ver. 8. 1. This call, though it was a very trying call, yet it was the call of God; and therefore a sufficient ground for faith and rule of obedience*. The manner in which he was called, Stephen relates in *Acts vii. 2. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham, when he was in Mesopotamia. And said unto him, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall shew thee*. This was an effectual call, by which he was converted from the idolatry of his father's house, *Gen. xii. 1. This call was renewed after his father's death in Charran*. Observe, 1. The grace of God is absolutely free in taking some of the worst, and making them the best of men. 2. That God must come to us, before we come to him. 3. That in calling and converting sinners, God appears as a God of glory, and works a glorious work in the soul. 4. That that calls us not only to leave sin, but sinful company, and whatever is inconsistent with our devotedness to him. 5. That we need not only to be called to set out well, but to go on well. 6. That he will not have his people take up that rest any where short of the heavenly Canaan.

2. The promise of God; God promised Abraham that the place he was called to he should afterwards receive for an inheritance; after a while he should have the heavenly Canaan for his inheritance, and in process of time his posterity should inherit the earthly Canaan. Observe here, 1. God calls his people to an inheri-

inheritance : By his effectual call he makes them children, and so heirs. 2. That this inheritance is not immediately possessed by them, but they must wait some time for it. But the promise is sure, and shall have its seasonable accomplishment. 3. The faith of parents often procures blessings for their posterity.

2. The exercise of Abraham's faith ; he yielded an implicit regard to the call of God. 1. *He went out, not knowing whither he went.* He put himself into the hand of God, to send him whithersoever he pleased ; he subscribed to God's wisdom, as fittest to direct ; and submitted to his will, as fittest to determine every thing that concerned him. Implicit faith and obedience are due to God, and to him only ; all that are effectually called, resign up their own will and wisdom to the will and wisdom of God, and it is their wisdom to do so ; though they know not always their way, yet they know their guide, and that satisfies them. 2. *He sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country.* This was an exercise of his faith. Observe, 1. How Canaan is called the land of promise, because yet only promised, not possessed. 2. How Abraham lived in Canaan, not as heir and proprietor, but as a sojourner only ; he did not serve an ejection, or raise a war against the old inhabitants to dispossess them, but contented himself to live as a stranger ; to bear their unkindnesses patiently, and to receive any favours from them thankfully, and to keep his heart fixed upon his home, the heavenly Canaan. 3. He dwelt in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise : He lived there in an ambulatory moving condition, living in a daily readiness for his remove : And thus should we all live in this world. He had good company with him, and they were a great comfort to him, in his sojourning state. Abraham lived till Isaac was seventy five years old, and Jacob fifteen. Isaac and Jacob were heirs of the same promise ; for the promise was renewed to Isaac, *Gen. xxvi.* 3. and to Jacob, *Gen. xxviii. 13.* All the saints are heirs of the same promise : The promise is made to believers and their children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call. And it is pleasant to see parents and children sojourning together in this world, as heirs of the heavenly inheritance.

3. The supports of Abraham's faith, *ver. 10. He looked for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* Observe here, 1. The description given of heaven : It is a city, a regular society, well established, well defended, and well supplied : It is a city that hath foundations, even the immutable purposes and almighty power of God ; the infinite merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ ; the promises of an everlasting covenant ; its own purity, and the perfection of its inhabitants : And it is a city, *whose builder and maker is God.* He contrived the model ; he accordingly made it, and he has laid open a new and living way into it, and prepared it for his people ; and he puts them into possession of it, and prefers them in it, and is himself the substance and felicity of it. 2. Observe the due regard that Abraham had to this heavenly city : He looked for it ; he believed there was such a state ; he waited for it, and in the mean time he conversed in it by faith, he had raised and rejoicing hopes, that in God's time and way he should be brought safely to it. 3. The influence this had upon his present conversation ; it was a support to him under all the trials of his sojourning state ; helped him patiently to bear all the inconveniences of it, and actively to discharge all the duties of it, persevering therein unto the end.

In the midst of the story of Abraham we have inserted an account of the faith of Sarah. Here observe,

1. The difficulties of Sarah's faith, which were very great. As, 1. The prevalency of unbelief for a time ; she laughed at the promise, as impossible to be made good. 2. She had gone out of the way of her duty through unbelief, in putting Abraham upon taking Hagar to his bed, that he might have a posterity. Now this sin of hers would make it more difficult for her to act by faith afterwards. 3. The great improbability of the thing promised, that she should be the mother of a child, when she was of sterile constitution naturally, and now past the prolifick age.

2. The actings of her faith. Her unbelief is pardoned and forgotten, but her faith prevailed, and is recorded. *She judged him faithful who had promised, ver. 11.* She received the promise as the promise of God ; and being convinced of that, she truly judged he both could, and would perform it, how impossible soever it might seem to reason ; for the faithfulness of God will not suffer him to deceive his people.

3. The fruits and rewards of her faith. 1. *She received strength to conceive seed,* The strength of nature, as well as grace, is from God ; he can make the barren soul fruitful, as well as the barren womb. 2. *She was delivered of a child,* a man-child, a child of the promise, the comfort of his parents advanced years, and the hope of future ages. 3. From them, by this son, sprung a numerous progeny of illustrious persons, *as the stars of the sky, ver. 12.* A great, powerful, and renowned nation above all the rest in the world ; and a nation of saints, the peculiar church and people of God ; and, which was the highest honour and reward of all, *of these, according to the flesh, the Messiah came, who is, over all God, blessed for evermore.*

The apostle proceeds to make mention of the faith of the other

patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, and the rest of this happy family, *ver. 13.* Where observe,

1. The trial of their faith in the imperfection of their present state : They had not received the promises, that is, they had not received the things promised ; they had not yet been put into possession of Canaan ; they had not yet seen their numerous issue ; they had not seen Christ in the flesh. Observe, 1. Many that are interested in the promises, do not presently receive the things promised. 2. That one imperfection of the present state of the saints on earth is, that their happiness lies more in promise and reversion, than in actual enjoyment and possession : The gospel state is much more perfect than the patriarchal, because more of the promises are now fulfilled : The heavenly state will be most perfect of all ; for there all the promises will have their full accomplishment.

2. The actings of their faith during this imperfect state of things, though they had not received the promises, yet, 1. They saw them afar off. Faith has a clear and a strong eye, and can see promised mercies at a great distance. Abraham saw Christ's day when it was afar off, and rejoiced, *John viii. 56.* 2. They were persuaded of them, that they were true, and should be fulfilled : Faith sets to its seal that God is true, and thereby settles and satisfies the soul. 3. They embraced them. Their faith was a faith of consent : Faith has a long arm, and can lay hold of blessings at a great distance ; can make them present ; can love them, and rejoice in them ; and thus antedate the enjoyment of them. 4. They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth. Observe, 1. Their condition, *strangers and pilgrims.* They are strangers as saints, whose home is heaven ; they are pilgrims as they are travelling towards their home, though oftentimes meanly and slowly. 2. Their acknowledgment of this their condition ; they were not ashamed to own it ; both their lips and their lives confessed their present condition ; they expected little from the world ; they cared not to engage much in it ; they endeavoured to lay aside every weight ; to gird up the loins of their minds ; to mind their way, to keep company and pace with their fellow-travellers, looking for difficulties, and bearing them, and longing to get home. 5. Hereby they declared plainly that they sought another country, *ver. 14.* heaven, their own country. For their spiritual birth and breeding is from thence, and there are their best relations, and there is their inheritance. This country they seek ; their designs are for it ; their desires are after it ; their discourse is about it ; they diligently endeavour to clear up their title to it ; to have their temper suited to it ; to have their conversation in it, and to come to the enjoyment of it. 6. They gave full proof of their sincerity in making such a confession. For, 1. They were not mindful of that country from whence they came, *ver. 15.* They did not hanker after the plenty and pleasures of it, nor regret and repent that they had left it ; they had no desire to return to it. Note, Those that are once effectually and savingly called out of a sinful state, have no mind to return into it again ; they now know better things. 2. They did not take the opportunity that offered it self for their return ; they might have had such an opportunity ; they had time enough to return ; they had natural strength to return ; they knew the way ; those with whom they sojourned would have been willing enough to have parted with them ; their old friends would have been glad to receive them ; they had sufficient to bear the charges of their journey ; and flesh and blood, a corrupt counsellor, would be sometimes suggesting to them a return, but they steadfastly adhered to God, and duty under all discouragements, and against all temptations to revolt from him. And so should all of us do. We shall not want opportunities, to revolt from God ; but we must shew the truth of our faith and profession by a steady adherence to him to the end of our days. 3. Their sincerity appeared not only in not returning to their former country, but in desiring a better country, that is, an heavenly. Observe, 1. The heavenly country is better than any upon earth ; it is better situated, better stored with every thing that is good, better secured from every thing that is evil ; the employments, the enjoyments, the society, and every thing in it is better than the best in this world. 2. All true believers desire this better country. True faith draws forth sincere and fervent desires, and the stronger faith is, the more fervent those desires will be.

7. They died in the faith of those promises ; not only lived by the faith of them, but died in the full persuasion that all the promises should be fulfilled to them and theirs, *ver. 13.* That faith held out to the last. By faith when they were dying they received the atonement ; they acquiesced in the will of God ; they quenched all the fiery darts of the devil ; they overcame the terrors of death, disarmed it of its sting, and bid a cheerful farewell to this world, and to all the comforts and crosses of it. These were the actings of their faith. Now observe,

3. The gracious and great reward of their faith, *ver. 16.* God is not ashamed to be their God, for he hath prepared for them a city. Note, 1. God is the God of all true believers, faith gives them an interest in God, and in all his fulness. 2. He is called their God : He calls himself so. *I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ;* and he gives them leave to call him so ; and he gives them the spirit of adoption to enable them to cry *Abba, Father.* 3. Notwithstanding their meanness by nature,

vileness by sin, and the poverty of their outward condition, God is not ashamed to be called their God; such is his condescension, such his love to them; therefore let them never be ashamed of being called his people, nor of any of those that are truly so, how much soever despised in the world. Above all, let them take care that they be not a shame and reproach to their God, and so provoke him to be ashamed of them; but let them act so as to be to him for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory. 4. As the proof of this, God has prepared for them a city, an happiness suitable to the relation into which he has taken them. For there is nothing in this world commensurate to the love of God, in being the God of his people; and if God neither could, nor would give his people something better than this world affords, he would be ashamed to be called their God. If he takes them into such a relation to himself, he will provide for them accordingly. If he takes to himself the title of their God, he will fully answer it, and act up to it; and he has prepared that for them in heaven that will fully answer this character and relation, so that it shall never be said to the reproach and dishonour of God, that he has adopted a people to be his own children, and then taken no care to make a suitable provision for them. The consideration of this should enflame the affections, enlarge the desires, and excite the diligent endeavours of the people of God after this city that he has prepared for them.

Now after the apostle has given this account of the faith of others, with Abraham, he returns to him again, and gives us an instance of the greatest trial and act of faith, that stands upon record, either in the story of the father of the faithful, or of any of his spiritual seed; and that was his offering up of Isaac, *ver. 17. By faith Abraham when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son.* In this great example observe,

1. The trial and exercise of Abraham's faith: He was tried indeed. It is said, *Gen. xxii. 1. God in this tempted Abraham;* not to sin, for so God tempteth no man, but only tried his faith and obedience to purpose. God had before this tempted or tried the faith of Abraham, when he called him away from his country and father's house; when by a famine he was forced out of Canaan into Egypt; when he was obliged to fight with five kings to rescue Lot; when Sarah was taken from him by Abimelech, and in many other instances. But this trial was greater than them all; he was commanded to offer up his son Isaac. Read the account of it, *Gen. xxii. 2. and there you will find every word was a trial; take now thy son, thine only Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.* Take thy son, not one of thy beasts or slaves, thine only son by Sarah, Isaac thy laughter, the child of thy joy and delight, whom thou lovest as thine own soul; take him away to a distant place, three days journey, the land of Moriah; do not only leave him there, but offer him for a burnt-offering. A greater trial was never put upon any creature. The apostle here mentions some things that very much add to the greatness of this trial.

1. He was put upon it after he *had received the promises*, that this Isaac should build up his family, and *that in him his seed should be called*, *ver. 18.* and that he should be one of the progenitors of the Messiah, and all nations blessed in him; so that in being called to offer up his Isaac, he seemed to be called to destroy and cut off his own family, to cancel the promises of God, to prevent the coming of Christ, and to destroy the whole world, and to sacrifice his own soul and his hopes of salvation, and to cut off the church of God at one blow; a most terrible trial!

2. That this Isaac was his only begotten son, by his wife Sarah, and the only one he was to have by her, and the only one that was to be the child and heir of the promise. Ishmael was to be put off with earthly greatness. Either the promises of a posterity, and of the Messiah must be fulfilled by means of this son, or not at all; so that besides his most tender affection to this his son, all his expectations were bound up in him, and if he perished, must perish with him. If Abraham had never so many sons, this was the only son that could convey to all nations the promised blessing; a son for whom he waited so long, received in so extraordinary manner, upon whom his heart was set, to have this son offered up as a sacrifice, and that by his own hand; it was a trial that would have overset the firmest and the strongest mind that ever informed a human body.

2. The actings of Abraham's faith in so great a trial. He obeyed; he offered up Isaac; he intentionally gave him up by his submissive soul to God, and was ready to have done it actually, according to the command of God; and he went as far in it as to the very critical moment, and would have gone through with it if God had not prevented him. Nothing could be more tender and moving than those words of Isaac, *My father, here is the wood, here is the fire, but where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?* Little thinking that he was to be the lamb; but Abraham knew it, and yet he went on with the great design.

3. The supports of his faith; and they must be very great, suitable to the greatness of the trial. He *accounted that God was able to raise him from the dead*, *ver. 19.* His faith was supported by

the sense he had of the mighty power of God, who was able to raise the dead; and he reasoned thus with himself, and so he resolved all his doubts. It does not appear that he had any expectation of being countermanded and prevented for offering up his son; the expectation of that would have spoiled the trial, and consequently the triumph of his faith; but he knew that God was able to raise him from the dead; and he did believe that God would do so, since such great things depended upon his Son, which must have failed, if Isaac had not a farther life. Observe, 1. God is able to raise the dead, to raise dead bodies, and to raise dead souls. 2. The belief of this will carry us through the greatest difficulties and trials that we can meet with. 3. It is our duty to be reasoning down our doubts and fears, by the consideration of the almighty power of God.

4. The reward of his faith in this great trial, *ver. 19.* he received his son from the dead in a figure, in a parable. 1. He received his son: He had parted with him to God, and God gave him back again. The best way to enjoy our comforts with comfort, is to resign them up to God, he will then return them, if not in kind, yet in kindness. 2. He received him from the dead, for he gave him up for dead; he was as a dead child to him, and the return was to him no less than a resurrection. 3. This was a figure or parable of something farther. It was a figure of the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ, of whom Isaac was a type. It was a figure and earnest of the glorious resurrection of all true believers, whose life is not lost, but hid with Christ in God. We come now to the faith of other Old Testament saints mentioned by name, and by the particular trials and actings of their faith.

20. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, concerning things to come. 21. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped *leaning* upon the top of his staff. 22. By faith Joseph when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. 23. By faith Moses when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw *he was* a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. 24. By faith Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25. Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward. 27. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. 28. Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born, should touch them. 29. By faith they passeth through the red sea, as by dry *land*: which the Egyptians assaying to do, were drowned. 30. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days. 31. By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

In this roll of believers we have an account,

1. Of the faith of Isaac; something of him we had before interwoven with the story of Abraham. Here we have something of a distinct nature, that by faith he blessed his two sons Jacob and Esau, *concerning things to come.* Where observe, 1. The actings of his faith: He *blessed Jacob and Esau, concerning things to come.* He blessed them; that is, he resigned them up to God in covenant; he recommended God and religion to them; he prayed for them, and prophesied concerning them, what would be their condition, and the condition in times to come; the account we have of this in *Gen. xxvii.* Observe, 1. Both Jacob and Esau were blessed as Isaac's children, at least as to temporal good things. It is a great privilege to be the offspring of good parents, and many times the wicked children of good parents fare the better in this world for their parents sake; for things present are in the covenant; they are not the best things, and no man knoweth love or hatred by having or wanting such things. 2. That Jacob had the precedency and the principal blessing, which shews that it is grace and the new birth that exalts persons above their fellows, and qualifies them for the best blessings. And that it is owing to the sovereign free grace of God, that in the same family one is taken and another left, one loved and the other hated, since all the race of Adam are by nature hateful to God; that if one has his portion in this world, and the other in the better world, it is God that makes the difference; for even the comforts of this life are more and better than any of the children of men deserve.

2. The difficulties Isaac's faith struggled with. 1. He seemed to have forgotten how God had determined the matter at the birth of these

these his sons, *Gen. xxv. 23.* This should have been a rule to him all along, but he was rather swayed by natural affection and general custom that give the double portion of honour, affection and advantage to the first-born. 2. He acted in this matter with some reluctance when he came to pronounce the blessings, *Gen. xxvii. 33.* *He trembled very exceedingly,* and charged Jacob that he had subtilly taken away Esau's blessing, *ver. 33, 35.* But for all this Isaac's faith recovered itself, and he ratified the blessing; *I have blessed him, yea, and he shall be blessed.* Rebecca and Jacob are not to be justified in the indirect means they used to obtain this blessing, but God will be justified in overruling even the sins of men to serve the purposes of his glory. Now the faith of Isaac thus prevailing over his unbelief, it has pleased the God of Isaac to pass by the weakness of his faith, and commend the sincerity of it, and record him among the elders, that *through faith have obtained a good report.* We now go on to,

6. The faith of Jacob, *ver. 21.* who *when he was dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped leaning upon the top of his staff.* There were a great many instances of the faith of Jacob; his life was a life of faith, and his faith met with great exercise. But it has pleased God to single two instances out of many of the faith of this patriarch, besides what has been already mentioned in the account of Abraham. Where observe,

1. The actings of his faith here mentioned, and they are two. 1. *He blessed both the sons of Joseph,* Ephraim and Manasseh; he adopted them into the number of his own sons, and so into the congregation of Israel, though they were born in Egypt. And it is doubtless a great blessing to be joined to the visible church of God in profession and privilege, but more to be so in spirit and truth. 2. He made them both heads of different tribes, as if they had been his own immediate sons. 3. He prayed for them, that they might both be blessed of God. 4. He prophesied that they should be blessed; but as before Isaac did, so now Jacob prefers the younger Ephraim; and though Joseph had placed them so, as that the right hand of his father should be laid on Manasseh the elder, Jacob wittingly laid it on Ephraim, and so this by divine direction, for he could not see; to shew, that the Gentile church the younger, should have a more abundant blessing than the Jewish church the elder. 2. *He worshipped leaning on his staff:* That is, he praised God for what he had done for him, and for the prospect he had of approaching blessedness; and he prayed for those he was leaving behind him, that religion might live in his family when he was gone. He did this *leaning on the top of his staff;* not, as the papists dream, that he worshipped some image of God engraven on the head of his staff; but intimating to us, his great natural weakness; that he was not able to support himself so far as to sit up in his bed without a staff; and yet that he would not make this an excuse for neglecting the worshipping of God; he would do it as well as he could with his body, as well as with his spirit, though he could not do it as well as he would. He shewed thereby his dependence upon God, and testified his condition here as a pilgrim with his staff, and his weariness of the world, and willingness to be at rest.

2. The time and season when Jacob thus acted his faith: When he was dying he lived by faith, and he died by faith and in faith. Observe, though the grace of faith is of universal use throughout our whole lives, yet it is especially so when we come to die. Faith has its greatest work to do at last, to help the believer to finish well, to die to the Lord so as to honour him, by patience, hope, and joy; so as to leave a witness behind them of the truth of God's word, and the excellency of his ways for the conviction and establishment of all that attend them in their dying moments. The best way in which parents can finish their course is, blessing their families, and worshipping their God. We are now come to,

7. The faith of Joseph, *ver. 22.* And here also we consider, 1. What he did by his faith, he made mention of the departing of the children of Israel, and gave commandment concerning his bones: The passage is out of *Gen. l. 24, 25.* Joseph was eminent for his faith, though he had not enjoyed the helps for it that the rest of his brethren had; he was sold into Egypt, he was tried by temptations, by sin, by persecution, for retaining his integrity; he was tried by preferment and power in the court of Pharaoh, and yet his faith held out, and carried him through to the last. 1. He made mention by faith of the departing of the children of Israel; the time should come when they should be delivered out of Egypt; and he did this both that he might caution them against the thoughts of settling in Egypt, which was now a place of plenty and ease to them; and also that he might keep them from sinking under calamities and distresses which he foresaw were coming upon them there; and he does it to comfort himself, that though he should not live to see their deliverance, yet he could die in the faith of it. 2. He gave commandment concerning his bones, that they should preserve them unburied in Egypt, till God should deliver them out of that house of bondage, and that then they should carry his bones along with them into Canaan, and deposit them there. Though the believer's chief concern is for his soul, yet they cannot wholly neglect their bodies, as being members of Christ, and parts of themselves, which shall at length be raised up, and be the happy companions of their glorified souls to all eternity. Now Joseph gave this order, not that he thought his being buried in Egypt, would either prejudice his soul, or prevent the resurrection of his body: Some of the Rabbies fan-

cied that all the Jews that were buried out of Canaan, must be conveyed under ground to Canaan before they could rise again: But he gave this order to testify, 1. That though he had lived and died in Egypt, yet he did not live and die an Egyptian, but an Israelite. 2. That he preferred a significant burial in Canaan before a magnificent one in Egypt. 3. That he would go as far with his people as he could, though he could not go as far he would. 4. That he believed the resurrection of the body, and the communion that his soul should presently have with departed saints, as his body had with their dead bodies. 5. To assure them that God would be with them in Egypt, and deliver them out of it in his own time and way. 2. Observe here when it was that the faith of Joseph acted after this manner, and that was as in the case of Jacob when dying. God often gives his people living comforts in dying moments, and when he does, it is their duty, as they can, to communicate them to those about them for the glory of God, for the honour of religion, and for the good of their brethren and friends. We go on now to,

8. The faith of the parents of Moses, which is cited from *Exod. ii. 3, &c.* Where observe,

1. The acting of their faith; they hid this their son three months: Though the mother of Moses is only mentioned in the history, yet by what is here said, it seems his father not only consented to it, but consulted about it. It is a happy thing where yoke-fellows draw together in the yoke of faith, as heirs of the grace of God; and when they do this in a religious concern for the good of their children, to preserve them not only from those that would destroy their lives, but corrupt their minds. Observe, Moses was persecuted betimes, and forced to be concealed; in this he was a type of Christ, who was persecuted almost as soon as he was born, and his parents forced to flee with him into Egypt for his preservation. It is a great mercy to be free from wicked laws and edicts; but when we are not, we must use all lawful means for our security. In this faith of Moses's parents there was a mixture of unbelief, but God was pleased to overlook it.

2. The reasons of their thus acting. No doubt natural affection could not but move them; but there was something farther. They *saw he was a proper child, a goodly child,* *Exod. ii. 2.* *exceeding fair,* as in *Acts vii. 20.* *ἀρετὸς καὶ θεῶν, venustus Deo, fair to God;* there appeared in him something uncommon; the beauty of the Lord sat upon him, as a presage that he was born to great things, and that by conversing with God his face should shine, *Exod. xxxiv. 29.* and what bright and illustrious actions he should do for the deliverance of Israel, and how his name should shine in the sacred records. Sometimes, not always, the countenance is the index of the mind.

3. The prevalency of their faith over their fear: They were not afraid of the king's commandment, *Exod. i. 22.* That was a wicked and a cruel edict, that all the males of the Israelites should be destroyed in their infancy; and so the name of Israel must be destroyed out of the earth. But they did not so fear as presently to give up their child; they considered that if none of the males were preserved, there would be an end and utter ruin of the church of God and the true religion, and that though in their present state of servitude and oppression one would praise the dead rather than the living, yet they believed God would preserve his people, and the time was coming when it would be worth the while for an Israelite to live. Some body must hazard their own lives to preserve their children, and they were resolved to do it; they knew the king's commandment was evil in itself, contrary to the laws of God and nature, and therefore of no authority or obligation. Faith is a great preservative against the sinful slavish fear of men, as it sets God before the soul, and shews the vanity of the creature, and its subordination to the will and power of God. The apostle next proceeds to,

9. The faith of Moses himself, *ver. 24, 25, &c.* Where observe,

1. An instance of his faith in conquering the world. 1. He *refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,* whose foundling he was, and her fondling too; she had adopted him for her son, and he refused it. Observe, 1. How great a temptation Moses was under; Pharaoh's daughter is said to have been his only child, and was herself childless; and having found Moses, and saved him as she did, they resolved to take him and breed him up as her son; and so he stood fair for to be in time king of Egypt, and he might thereby have been serviceable to Israel. He owed his life to this princess; and to refuse such kindness from her, would look not only like ingratitude to her, but a neglect of providence, that seemed to intend his advancement, and his brethren's advantage. 2. How glorious was the triumph of his faith in so great a trial! He *refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,* lest he should undervalue the truer honour of being a son of Abraham, the father of the faithful; *he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,* lest it should look like renouncing his religion as well as his relation to Israel; and no doubt both these he must have done, if he had accepted this honour; he therefore nobly refuses it.

2. He *chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,* *ver. 25.* He was willing to take his lot with the people of God here, though it were a suffering lot, that he might have his portion with them hereafter, rather than to enjoy all the sensual sinful pleasures of Pharaoh's

court, which would be but for a season, and then punished with everlasting misery. Herein he acted rationally as well as religiously, and conquered the temptation to worldly pleasure, as he had done before to worldly preferment. Here observe, 1. The pleasures of sin are and will be but short; they must either end in speedy repentance or ruin. 2. That the pleasure of this world, and especially those of a court, are too often the pleasures of sin; and they are always so when we cannot enjoy them without deserting God and his people; and a true believer will despise them when they are offered upon such terms. 3. Suffering is to be chose rather than sin; there being more evil in the least sin, than there can be in the greatest suffering. 4. It greatly alleviates the evil of suffering, when we suffer with the people of God, embarked in the the same interest, and animated by the same Spirit.

3. He esteemed *the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt*, ver. 26. See how Moses weighed matters; in one scale he put the worst of religion, *the reproaches of Christ*; in the other scale the best of the world, *the treasures of Egypt*; and in his judgment directed by faith, the worst of religion weighed down the best of the world; the reproaches of the church of God are *the reproaches of Christ*, who is and has ever been the head of the church. Now here Moses conquered the riches of the world, as before he had conquered its honours and pleasures. God's people are, and always have been a reproached people. Christ accounts himself reproached in their reproaches; and while he thus interests himself in their reproaches, they become riches, and greater riches than the treasures of the richest empire in the world; for Christ will reward them with a crown of glory that fades not away. Faith discerns this, and determines and acts accordingly.

2. The circumstance of time is taken notice of when Moses, by his faith gained this victory over the world, in all its honours, pleasures, and treasures. *When he was come to years*, ver. 24. Not only to years of discretion, but of experience, to the age of forty years; when he was great, or come to maturity. Some would take this as an extenuation of his victory, that he gained it so late, that he did not make this choice sooner; but it is rather an enhancement of the honour of his self-denial and victory over the world, that he made this choice when he was grown ripe for judgment and enjoyment, able to know what he did, and why he did it. It was not the act of a child, that prefers counters to gold, but it proceeded from mature deliberation. It is an excellent thing for persons to be seriously religious, when in the midst of worldly business and enjoyments, to despise the world, when they are most capable of relishing and enjoying it.

3. What it was that supported and strengthened the faith of Moses to that degree as to enable him to gain such a victory of the world, *he had respect to the recompence of reward*, i. e. say some, the deliverance out of Egypt; but doubtless it means much more the glorious reward of faith and fidelity in the other world. Observe here, 1. Heaven is a great reward, not only surpassing all our deservings, but all our conceptions: It is a reward suitable to the price paid for it; the blood of Christ, suitable to the perfections of God, and fully answering all his promises. It is a *recompence of reward*, because given by a righteous judge for the righteousness of Christ to righteous persons, according to the righteous rule of the covenant of grace. 2. Believers may, and ought to have respect to this *recompence of reward*; they should acquaint themselves with it, approve of it, and live in the daily and delightful expectation of it. And thus it will prove a land-mark to direct their course; a loadstone to draw their hearts; a sword to conquer their enemies, and a spur to quicken them to duty; a cordial to refresh them under all the difficulties of doing and suffering work.

2. We have another instance of the faith of Moses, and that was in forsaking Egypt, ver. 27. *By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king*. Twice Moses forsook Egypt; 1. As a criminal, when the king's wrath was incensed against him for killing the Egyptian; where it is said he did fear, *Exod. ii. 14, 15*. Not with a fear of despondency, but of discretion to save his life. 2. As a commander and ruler in Jeshurun, after God had employed him to humble Pharaoh, and make him willing to let Israel go. Observe here,

1. The product of his faith. *He forsook Egypt*, and all its power and pleasure, and undertook the conduct of Israel out of it.

2. The prevalency of his faith. It raised him above the fear of the king's wrath, though he knew it was great, and levelled at him in particular; that it marched at the head of a numerous host to pursue him; he was not dismayed, and he said to Israel, *fear not*, *Exod. xiv. 13*. Those that forsake Egypt, must expect the wrath of men; but they need not fear it, for they are under the conduct of that God that is able to make the wrath of man to praise him, and restrain the remainder of it.

3. The principle upon which his faith acted in these his motions. *He endured, as seeing him that is invisible*; he bore up with invincible courage under all danger, and endured all the fatigue of his employment, which was very great; and this by seeing the invisible God. Observe, 1. The God with whom we have to do, as an invisible God; he is so to our senses, to the eye of the body; and this shews the folly of those that pretend to make images of God; whom no man hath seen, or can see. 2. By faith we may see this invisible God; we may be fully assured of his existence, and of his provi-

dence, and of his gracious and powerful presence with us. 3. Such a sight of God will enable believers to endure to the end, whatever they may meet with in the way.

3. We have yet another instance of the faith of Moses in keeping *the passover and sprinkling of blood*, ver. 28. The account of this we have in *Exod. xii. 13,—23*. Though all Israel kept this passover, yet it was by Moses that God delivered the institution of it; and though it was a great mystery, Moses by faith both delivered to the people, and kept it that night in the house where he lodged. The passover was one of the most solemn institutions of the Old Testament, and a very significant type of Christ. The occasion of its first observation was extraordinary: It was in the same night that God slew the first-born of the Egyptians; but though the Israelites lived among them, the destroying angels passed over their houses, and spared them and theirs.

Now, to entitle them to this distinguishing favour, and to mark them out for it, a lamb must be slain, the blood of it must be sprinkled with a bunch of hyssop upon the lintel of the door, and on the two side-posts; and the flesh of the lamb must be roasted with fire, and it must be all of it eaten that very night with bitter herbs, in a travelling posture, their loins girt, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand. This was accordingly done, and the destroying angel passed over them, and slew the first-born of the Egyptians. And this opened a way for the return of Abraham's posterity in the land of promise.

The accommodation of this type is not difficult. 1. Christ is that lamb, he is our passover, he was sacrificed for us. 2. His blood must be sprinkled; it must be applied to those who have the saving benefit of it. 3. It is only applied effectually to the Israelites, the chosen people of God. 4. It is not owing to our inherent righteousness, or best performances that we are saved from the wrath of God, but unto the blood of Christ and his imputed righteousness. If any of the families of Israel had neglected the sprinkling of this blood upon their doors, though they should have spent all the night in prayer, the destroying angel would have broke in upon them, and slain their first-born. 5. Wherever this blood is applied, the soul receives a whole Christ by faith, and lives upon him. 6. This true faith makes sin bitter to the soul, even while it receives the pardon and atonement. 7. That all our spiritual privileges on earth should quicken us to set out early, and get forward in our way to heaven. 8. Those that have been marked out, must ever remember and acknowledge free and distinguishing grace.

10. The next instance of faith is that of the Israelites passing through the red sea under the conduct of Moses their leader, ver. 29. The story we have in *Exod. xiv*. Where observe,

1. The preservation and safe passage of the Israelites through the red sea, when there was no other way to escape from Pharaoh and his host that were closely pursuing them: Where we may observe, 1. That Israel's danger was very great; an enraged enemy with chariots and horsemen behind them; steep rocks and mountains on each hand, and the red sea before them. 2. That their deliverance was very glorious. By faith they passed through the red sea as by dry land; the grace of faith will help us through all the dangers we meet with in our way to heaven.

2. The destruction of the Egyptians. They presumptuously attempting to follow Israel through the red sea, being thus blinded and hardened to their ruin, were all drowned. Their rashness was great, and their ruin was grievous. When God judges, he will overcome; and it is plain that the destruction of sinners is of themselves.

11. The next instance of faith is that of the Israelites under Joshua their leader before the walls of Jericho. The story we have, *Jos. vi. 5*. where observe, 1. The means prescribed of God to bring down the walls of Jericho, and that was, that they should compass the walls about once a day for seven days together, and seven times the last day, and that the priests should carry the ark when they compassed the walls about, and should blow with trumpets made of rams horns, and sound a longer blast than before, and then all the people should shout, and the walls of Jericho should fall before them. Here was a great trial of their faith; the method prescribed seems very improbable to answer such an end, and would doubtless expose them to the daily contempt of their enemies; the ark of God would seem to be in danger. But this was the way God commanded them to take, and he loves to do great things by small and contemptible means, that his own arm may be made bare. 2. The powerful success of the prescribed means, the walls of Jericho fell before them. This was a frontier town in the land of Canaan, the first that stood out against the Israelites. God was pleased in this extraordinary manner to slight and dismantle it; to magnify himself; to terrify the Canaanites; to strengthen the faith of the Israelites, and to exclude all boasting. God can and will, in his own time and way, cause all the powerful opposition that is made to his interest and glory to fall down, and the grace of faith is mighty through God for the pulling down of strong holds; he will make Babylon fall before the faith of his people, and when he has some great thing to do for them, he raises up great and strong faith in them.

12. The next instance is *the faith of Rahab*, ver. 31. Among the noble army of believing worthies, bravely marshalled by the apostle, Rahab comes in the rear, to shew *that God is no respecter of persons*. Here consider, 1. Who this Rahab was: (1.) She was a Canaanite,

Canaanite, a *stranger to the commonwealth of Israel*, and had but little help for faith, and yet she was a believer: The power of divine grace greatly appears, when it works without the usual means of grace. (2.) She was a *harlot*, and lived in a way of sin; she was not only a keeper of a publick house, but a common woman of the town, and yet she believed the greatness of sin, if truly repented of, shall be no bar to the pardoning mercy of God: Christ has saved the chief of sinners; *where sin has abounded, grace has superabounded.* 2. What she did by her faith; *she received the spies with peace, the men that Joshua had sent to spy out Jericho*, Joshua ii. 6, 7.

She not only bade them welcome, but she concealed them from their enemies that sought to cut them off, and she made a noble confession of her faith, *ver. 9, 10, 11.* She engaged them to *covenant with her to shew favour to her and hers, when God should shew kindness to them, and that they would give her a sign, which they did, a line of scarlet, which she was to hang forth out of the window; she sent them away with prudent and friendly advice.* Learn here,

1. That true faith will shew itself in good works, especially towards the people of God. 2. Faith will venture all hazard in the cause of God, and his people; a true believer will sooner expose his own person, than God's interest and people. 3. A true believer is desirous, not only to be in covenant with God, but in communion with the people of God, and is willing to cast in his lot with them, and to fare as they fare. 3. Observe what Rahab gained by her faith; she escaped *perishing with those that believed not.* Observe,

1. The generality of her neighbours, friends, and fellow-citizens, perished; it was an utter destruction that beset that city; man and beast were cut off. 2. The cause of the people of Jericho's destruction, and that was unbelief; they believed not that Israel's God was the true God, and that Israel was the peculiar people of God, though they had evidence sufficient of it. 3. The signal preservation of Rahab. Joshua gave a strict charge *that she should be spared, and none but she and hers; and she taking care that the sign, the scarlet thread, should be hung out, her family were marked out for mercy, and perished not.* Singular faith, when the generality are not only unbelievers, but against believers, will be rewarded with singular favours in times of common calamity.

32. And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah, of David also and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33. Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34. Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36. And others had trial of cruel mockings, and scourgings, yea moreover, of bonds and imprisonment. 37. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented: 38. (Of whom the world was not worthy) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. 39. And these all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: 40. God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

The apostle having given us a classis of many eminent believers, whose names are mentioned, and the particular trials and actings of their faith recorded; he now concludes his narrative with a more summary account of another set of believers, where the particular acts are not ascribed to particular persons by name, but left to be applied by those that are well acquainted with the sacred story; and, like a divine orator, he prefaces this part of the narrative with an elegant exhortation: *What shall I say more? time would fail me*, q. d. it is in vain to attempt to exhaust this subject; should I not restrain my pen, it would soon run beyond the bounds of an epistle; and therefore I shall but just mention a few more, and leave you to enlarge upon them. Observe, 1. After all our researches into the scripture, there is still more to be learned from them. 2. That we must well consider in divine matters what we should say, and suit it as well as we can to the time. 3. We should be pleased to think how great the number of believers was, under the Old Testament, and how strong their faith, though the objects thereof were not then so fully revealed: And, 4. We should lament it, that now, in gospel times, when the rule of faith is more clear and perfect, the number of believers should be so small, and their faith so weak.

In this summary account the apostle, 1. Mentions Gideon, whose story we have in *Judges vi. 11, &c.* He was an eminent instrument raised up of God to deliver his people from the oppression of the Midianites; he was a person of a mean tribe and family, and called from a mean employment, threshing wheat, saluted by an angel of God in this surprizing manner, *The Lord is with thee, thou*

mighty man of war. Gideon could not at first receive such honours, but humbly expostulates with the angel about their low and distressed state; the angel of the Lord delivered him his commission, and assured him of success, confirming it by *fire out of the rock*: Gideon is directed to *offer sacrifice*, and instructed in his duty, goes forth against the Midianites, when his army was reduced from thirty two thousand to three hundred; yet by these, with *their lamps and pitchers*, God put the whole army of the Midianites to confusion and ruin: And the same faith that gave Gideon so much courage and honour, enabled him to act with great meekness and modesty towards his brethren afterward. It is the excellency of the grace of faith, that, while it helps men to do great things, it keeps them from having high and great thoughts of themselves.

2. Barak, another instrument raised up to deliver Israel out of the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan, *Judges iv.* where we read, 1. That though he was a soldier, yet he received his commission and instructions from Deborah, a *prophetess of the Lord*; and he insisted upon having this divine oracle with him in his expedition. 2. He obtained a great victory by his faith over all the host of Sisera. 3. That his faith taught him to return all the praise and glory to God: This is the existent nature of faith, it has recourse unto God in all dangers and difficulties, and then makes grateful returns to God for all mercies and deliverances.

3. Samson, another instrument that God raised up to deliver Israel from the Philistines; his story we have in *Judges chap. xiii, xiv, xv, xvi.* and from it we learn, that the grace of faith is the strength of the soul for great service: If Samson had not had a strong faith, as well as a strong arm, he had never performed such exploits. 1. That by faith the servants of God shall overcome even the roaring lion. 2. That true faith is acknowledged and accepted, even when mingled with many failings. 3. That the believer's faith endures to the end, and, in dying, gives him victory over death, and all his deadly enemies; his greatest conquests he gains by dying.

4. Jephthah, whose story we have, *Judg. xi.* before Samson; he was raised up to deliver Israel from the Ammonites: As various and new enemies rise up against the people of God, various and new deliverers are raised up for them. In the story of Jephthah, observe, 1. That the grace of God often finds out, and fastens upon, the most undeserving and ill-deserving persons, to do great things for them, and by them: Jephthah was the son of an harlot. 2. That the grace of faith, wherever it is, will put men upon acknowledging God in all their ways, chap. xi. 11. *Jephthah rehearsed all his words before the Lord in Mizpeh.* 3. The grace of faith will make men bold and venturous in a good cause. 4. That faith will not only put men upon making their vows to God, but upon paying their vows after the mercy received; yea though they have vowed to their own great grief, hurt, and loss; as in the case of Jephthah and his daughter.

5. David, that great *man after God's own heart*; few ever met with greater trials, and few ever discovered a more lively faith; his first appearance on the stage of the world was a great evidence of his faith; having, when young, slain *the lion and the bear*, his faith in God encouraged him to encounter the great Goliath, and helped him to triumph over him: The same faith enabled him to bear patiently the ungrateful malice of Saul, and his favourites, and to wait till God should put him into possession of the promised power and dignity. The same faith made him a very successful and victorious prince, and, after a long life of virtue and honour (though not without some foul stains of sin) he died in faith, relying upon that everlasting covenant that God had made with him and his, ordered in all things, and sure; and he has left behind him such excellent memoirs of the trials and acts of faith in the book of *Psalms*, as will ever be of great esteem and use to the people of God.

6. Samuel, raised up to be a most eminent prophet of the Lord to Israel, as well as a ruler over them: God *revealed himself to Samuel when he was but a child*, and continued to do so till his death. In his story observe, 1. That those are like to grow up to some eminency in faith, that begin betimes in the exercise of it. 2. They, whose business it is to reveal the mind and will of God to others, had need to be well established in the belief of it themselves. To Samuel he adds, *and of the prophets*, who were extraordinary ministers of the Old Testament church, employed of God sometimes to denounce judgment, sometimes to promise mercy, always to reprove sin; sometimes to foretel remarkable events, known only to God; and chiefly to give notice of the Messiah, his coming, person, and offices; for in him *the prophets* as well as the law centre: Now a true and strong faith was very requisite for the right discharge of such an office as this.

And now, having done naming particular persons, he proceeds to tell us, what things were done by *their faith*; he mentions some things that easily apply themselves to one or other of the persons named; but he mentions other things that are not so easy to be accommodated to any here named, but must be left to general conjecture, or accommodation.

1. By faith they subdued kingdoms, *ver. 33.* Thus did David, Joshua, and many of the judges. Learn hence, 1. The interests and powers of kings and kingdoms are often set up in opposition to God, and his people. 2. That God can easily subdue all those kings and kingdoms that set themselves to oppose him. 3. That faith is a suitable and excellent qualification of those that fight in the

wars of the Lord ; it makes them just, bold, and wise.

2. They wrought righteousness, both in their publick and personal capacities ; they turned many from idolatry to the ways of righteousness ; they believed God, and it was imputed to them for righteousness ; they walked and acted righteously towards God and man. It is a greater honour and happiness to work righteousness, than to work miracles ; faith is an active principle of universal righteousness.

3. They obtained promises, both general and special : It is faith that gives us an interest in the promises ; it is by faith that we have the comfort of the promises ; and it is by faith that we are prepared to wait for the promises, and in due time to receive them.

4. They stopped the mouths of lions ; so did Samson, *Judg.* xiv. 5, 6. and David, *1 Sam.* xvii. 34. and Daniel, *chap.* vi. 22. Here learn, 1. That the power of God is above the power of the creature : And, 2. That faith engages the power of God for his people, whenever it shall be for his glory to overcome brute beasts, and brutish men.

5. They quenched the violence of the fire, ver. 33. So Moses, by the prayer of faith, quenched the fire of God's wrath that was kindled against the people of Israel, *Numb.* xi. 1, 2. So did the three children, or rather, mighty champions, *Dan.* iii. 17. their faith in God, refusing to worship the golden image, exposed them to the fiery furnace which Nebuchadnezzar had prepared for them, and their faith engaged for them that power and presence of God in the furnace as quenched the violence of the fire, so that not so much as the smell thereof passed on them : Never was the grace of faith more severely tried, never more nobly exerted, nor ever more gloriously rewarded, than theirs was.

6. They escaped the edge of the sword. Thus David escaped the sword of Goliath, and of Saul ; and Mordecai and the Jews, escaped the sword of Haman. The swords of men are held in the hand of God, and he can blunt the edge of the sword, and turn it away from his people against their enemies, when he pleases. Faith takes hold of that hand of God which has hold of the swords of men, and God has often suffered himself to be prevailed upon by the faith of his people.

7. Out of weakness they were made strong ; from national weakness, into which the Jews often fell by their unbelief ; upon the revival of faith, all their interest and affairs revived and flourished : From bodily weakness ; thus Hezekiah believing the word of God, recovered out of a mortal distemper ; and he ascribed his recovery to the promise and power of God, *Isa.* xxxviii. 15. *What shall I say ? he hath spoken it, and he hath also done it : — Lord, by these things men live, and in these is the life of my spirit.* And it is the same grace of faith that from spiritual weakness helps men to recover and renew their strength.

8. They grew valiant in fight ; so did Joshua, the judges, and David. True faith gives truest courage and patience, as it discerns the strength of God, and thereby the weakness of all his enemies ; and they were not only valiant, but successful. God, as a reward and encouragement of their faith, put to flight the armies of the aliens, of those that were aliens to their commonwealth, and enemies to their religion ; God made them flee and fall before his faithful servants : Believing and praying commanders, at the head of believing and praying armies, have been so owned and honoured of God, that nothing could stand before them.

9. Women received their dead raised to life again, ver. 35. So did the widow of Zarephtha, *1 Kings* xvii. 20. and the Shunamite, *2 Kings* iv. 36. 1. In Christ there is neither male nor female ; many of the weaker sex have been strong in faith. 2. Though the covenant of grace takes in the children of believers, yet it leaves them subject to natural death. 3. Poor mothers are loth to resign up their interest in their children, though death has taken them away from them. 4. God has sometimes yielded so far to the tender affections of sorrowful women, as to restore their dead children to life again : Thus Christ had compassion on the widow of Nain, *Luke* vii. 12. 5. This should confirm our faith in the general resurrection.

2. The apostle tells us what these believers endured by faith :

1. They were tortured, not accepting deliverance, ver. 35. They were put upon the rack to make them renounce their God, their Saviour, and their religion ; and they bore the torture, and would not accept of deliverance upon such vile terms ; and that which animated them thus to suffer, was the hope they had of obtaining a better resurrection, and deliverance upon more honourable terms : This is thought to refer to that memorable story, *2 Maccabees* vii, &c.

2. They endured trials of cruel mockings, and scourgings, and bonds and imprisonment, ver. 36. They were persecuted in their reputation by mockings, which are cruel to an ingenuous mind ; in their persons by scourging, the punishment of slaves ; in their liberty by bonds and imprisonment. Observe how inveterate is the malice that wicked men have towards the righteous ; how far it will go, and what a variety of cruelties it will invent and exercise upon those against whom they have no cause of quarrel, except in the matters of their God.

3. They were put to death in the most cruel manner ; some were stoned, as Zechariah, *2 Chron.* xxiv. 21. sawn asunder, as Isaias by Manasseh : They were tempted ; some read it, burnt, *Macc.* vii. 5. They were slain with the sword. All sorts of deaths were prepa-

red for them ; their enemies clothed death in all the array of cruelty and terror, and yet they boldly met it, and endured it.

4. Those that escaped death were used so ill, as that death might seem more eligible than such a life : Their enemies spared them only to prolong their misery, and wear out all their patience ; for they were forced to wander about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, and tormented ; they wandered about in deserts, and on mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth, ver. 37, 38. They were stripped of the conveniencies of life, turned out of house and harbour ; they had not raiment to put on, but were forced to cover themselves with the skins of slain beasts ; they were driven out of all human society, and forced to converse with the beasts of the field, to hide themselves in dens and caves, and make their complaint to rocks and rivers, not more obdurate than their enemies. Such sufferings as these they endured then for their faith ; and such they endured through the power of the grace of faith ; and which shall we most admire ? the wickedness of human nature, that is capable of acting such cruelties on fellow-creatures ! or the excellency of divine grace, that is able to bear up the faithful under such cruelties, and to carry them safely through all !

3. What they obtained by their faith.

1. A most honourable character and commendation from God, the true Judge and Fountain of honour, i. e. that the world was not worthy of such men ; the world did not deserve such blessings ; they did not know how to value them, nor how to use them ! Wicked men ! the righteous are not worthy to live in the world, and God declares, the world is not worthy of them ; and though they widely differ in their judgment, they agree in this, that it is not fit good men should have their rest in this world ; and therefore God receives them out of it to that world that is suitable to them, and yet far beyond the merit of all their services and sufferings.

2. They obtained a good report, ver. 39. of all good men, and of the truth itself, and have the honour to be enrolled in this sacred calendar of the Old Testament worthies, God's witnesses ; yea, they had a witness for them in the consciences of their enemies, who, while they thus abused them, were condemned by their own consciences, as persecuting those that were more righteous than themselves.

3. They obtained an interest in the promises, though not the full possession of them : They had a title to the promises, though they received not the great things promised. This is not meant of the felicity of the heavenly state, for that they did receive, when they died, in the measure of a part, in one constituent part of their persons, and the much better part ; but it is meant of the felicity of the gospel state ; they had types, but not the antitype ; they had shadows, but had not seen the substance ; and yet, under this imperfect dispensation, they discovered this precious faith : And this the apostle insists upon to render their faith more illustrious, and to provoke Christians to an holy jealousy and emulation ; that they should not suffer themselves to be outdone in the exercise of faith, by those that came so short of them in all the helps and advantages for believing : He tells the Hebrews God had provided some better things for them, ver. 40. and therefore they might be assured he expected at least as good things from them ; and that, since the gospel is the end and perfection of the Old Testament, which had no excellency but in its reference to Christ and the gospel, it was expected that their faith should be as much more perfect than the faith of the Old Testament saints ; for their state and dispensation was more perfect than the former, and was indeed the perfection and completion of the former ; for without the gospel church, the Jewish church must have remained in an incomplete and imperfect state. This reasoning is strong, and should be effectually prevalent with us all.

C H A P. XII.

The apostle, in this chapter, applies what he had collected in the chapter foregoing, and makes use of it as a great motive to patience and perseverance in the Christian faith and state, pressing home the argument, 1. From a greater example than he had yet mentioned, and that is Christ himself, ver. 1,—3. 2. From the gentle and gracious nature of the afflictions they endured in their Christian course, ver. 4,—18. 3. From the communion and conformity between the state of the gospel church on earth, and the triumphant church in heaven, from ver. 18. to the end of the chapter.

1. **W**herefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, 2. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith ; who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied, and faint in your minds.

Here observe, 1. What is the great duty which the apostle urges upon the Hebrews, and which he so much desires they would comply with, and that is, to lay aside every weight, and the sin that did so easily beset them, and run with patience the race set before them.

The

The duty consists of two parts, the one preparatory, the other perfective.

1. Preparatory : *Lay aside every weight, and the sin, &c.* 1. *Every weight*, that is, all inordinate affection and concern for the body, and the present life and world ; inordinate care for the present life, and fondness for it, is a dead *weight* upon the soul, that pulls it down when it would ascend upwards, and pulls it back when it should press forward ; it makes duty and difficulties harder and heavier than they would be. 2. *The sin that does so easily beset us.* The *sin* that has the greatest advantage against us, by the circumstances we are in, our constitution, our company. This may mean, either the damning sin of unbelief, or rather, the darling sin of the Jews, an over-fondness for their own dispensation : *Let us lay aside all external and internal hindrances.*

2. Perfective : *Run with patience the race that was set before them.* The apostle speaks in the gymnastic stile, taken from the Olympic, and other exercises. 1. Christians have a *race to run* ; a *race* of service, and a *race* of sufferings ; a course of active and passive obedience. 2. This *race is set before them*, it is marked out unto them, both by the word of God, and the examples of the faithful servants of God, that *cloud of witnesses*, with which they are compassed about. It is set out by proper limits and direction ; the mark they run to, and the prize they run for, are *set before them*. 3. This *race must be run with patience*, and perseverance : There will be need of *patience* to encounter the difficulties that lie in our way, of perseverance to resist all temptations to desist, or turn aside : *Faith and patience*, are the conquering graces ; and therefore must be always cultivated, and kept in lively exercise. 4. Christians have a greater example to animate and encourage them in their Christian course, than any, or all, that have been mentioned before, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, *ver. 2. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith* : Where observe,

1. What our Lord Jesus is to his people ; he is *the author and finisher of their faith* ; the beginning, and perfecter, and rewarder of it. 1. He is *the author of their faith* ; not only the object, but *the author* : He is the great leader and precedent of *our faith*, *he trusted in God* ; he is the purchaser of the Spirit of *faith* ; the publisher of the rule of *faith* ; the efficient cause of the grace of *faith* ; and, in all respects, *the author of our faith*. 2. He is *the finisher of our faith* ; he is the fulfiller, and the fulfilling of all scripture promises and prophecies ; he is the perfecter of the canon of scripture ; and he is *the finisher of grace, and work of faith*, with power, in the souls of his people ; and he is the judge and the rewarder of their *faith* ; he determines who they are that reach the mark, and from him, and in him, they have the prize.

2. What trials Christ met with in his *race* and course : 1. He *endured the contradiction of sinners against himself*, *ver. 3.* he bore the opposition that they made to him, both in their words and behaviour ; they were continually contradicting him, and crossing in upon his great designs ; and though he could easily have both confuted and confounded them, and sometimes gave them a specimen of his power, yet he *endured* their evil manners with great patience ; their contradictions were levelled against Christ himself, against his person as God-man ; against his authority ; against his preaching ; and yet he *endured* all. 2. He *endured the cross* ; all those sufferings that he met with in the world ; for he took up his cross betimes, and was at length nailed to it, and *endured a painful, ignominious, and accursed death* ; in which *he was numbered with the transgressors*, the vilest malefactors ; yet all this he *endured* with invincible patience and resolution. 3. He *despised the shame*, all the reproaches that were cast upon him, both in his life, and at his death, he despised them all, was infinitely above them ; he knew his innocency, and his own excellency, and despised the ignorance and malice of his despisers.

3. What it was that supported the human soul of Christ under these unparalleled sufferings ; and that was *the joy that was set before him* : He had something in view under all his sufferings, which was pleasant to him ; he rejoiced to see, that, by his sufferings, he should make satisfaction to the injured justice of God, and give security to his honour and government ; that he should make peace between God and man ; that he should seal the covenant of grace, and be the mediator of it ; that he should open a way of salvation to the chief of sinners, and that he should effectually save all those that *the Father had given him, and himself be the first-born among many brethren* : This was *the joy that was set before him*.

4. The reward of his suffering ; he is *set down at the right hand of the throne of God*. Christ, as mediator, is exalted to a station of the highest honour, of the greatest power and influence ; he is *at the right hand of the Father* ; nothing passes between heaven and earth but by him ; he does all that is done ; *he ever lives to make intercession for his people*.

5. What is our duty with respect to this Jesus ; we must, 1. *Look unto him* ; that is, we must set him continually before us as our example, and our great encouragement ; we must *look to him* for direction, for assistance, and for acceptance in all our sufferings. 2. We must *consider him*, meditate much upon him, and reason with ourselves from his case to our own : We must *analogize*, as the word is ; compare Christ's suffering and ours, and we shall find, that as his sufferings far exceeded ours in the nature and measure of

them ; so his patience far excels ours, and is a perfect pattern for us to imitate.

6. The advantage we shall reap by thus doing ; it will be a means to prevent our weariness and fainting, *ver. 3. Lest ye be weary, and faint in your minds.* Observe, 1. There is a proneness in the best to grow *weary*, and to *faint* under their trials and afflictions, especially when they prove heavy, and of long continuance : This proceeds from the imperfection of grace, and remains of corruption. 2. The best way to prevent this, is to *look unto Jesus*, and to *consider him* : Faith and meditation will fetch in fresh supplies of strength, comfort, and courage ; for he has assured them, if *they suffer with him, they shall also reign with him* : And this hope will be their helmet.

4. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. 5. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him. 6. For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. 7. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons : for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not ? 8. But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. 9. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence : shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live ? 10. For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure ; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. 11. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous : nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby. 12. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees. 13. And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way, but let it rather be healed. 14. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord : 15. Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God ; lest any root of bitterness springing up, trouble you, and thereby many be defiled : 16. Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. 17. For ye know how that afterward when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected : for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Here the apostle presses the exhortation to patience and perseverance by an argument taken from the gentle measure and gracious nature of those sufferings the believing Hebrews endured in their Christian course.

1. From the gentle and moderate degree and measure of their sufferings : *Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin*, *ver. 4.* Observe, 1. He owns they had suffered much, they had been *striving* to an agony *against sin*. Here, 1. The cause of the conflict was *sin*, and to be engaged *against sin*, is to fight in a good cause ; for *sin* is the worst enemy both to God and man : Our spiritual warfare is both honourable and necessary ; for we are only defending ourselves against that which would destroy us, if it should get the victory over us ; we fight for ourselves, for our lives, and therefore ought to be patient and resolute. 2. Every Christian is lifted under Christ's banner to *strive against sin*, against sinful doctrines, and sinful practices, and sinful habits, and customs, both in themselves, and others. Observe, 2. He puts them in mind that they might have suffered more ; others have suffered more ; for they had *not yet resisted unto blood* ; they had not been called to martyrdom as yet, though they knew not how soon they might be. Learn here, 1. Our Lord Jesus, *the captain of our salvation*, does not use to call his people out to the hardest trials at the first, but wisely trains them up by lesser sufferings to be prepared for greater : He will not put new wine into weak vessels ; he is *the gentle shepherd*, that will not over-drive *the young ones of the flock*. 2. It becomes Christians to take notice of the gentleness of Christ in accommodating their trial to their strength ; they should not magnify their afflictions, but should take notice of the mercy that is mixed with them, and should pity those that are called to the fiery trial to *resist to blood* ; not to the shedding of *the blood of their enemies*, but to sealing their testimony with *their own blood*. 3. Christians should be ashamed to faint under lesser trials, when they see others bear up under greater, and do not know how soon they may meet with greater themselves. *If we run with the footmen, and they have wearied us, how shall we contend with horses ? If we be wearied in a land of peace, what shall we do in the swellings of Jordan ?* Jer. xii. 5.

2. He argues from the peculiar and gracious nature of those sufferings that befall the people of God ; though their enemies and persecutors may be the instruments of inflicting such sufferings on them, yet they are divine chastisements ; their heavenly Father has his

hand in all, and his wife end to serve by all; and of this he has given them due notice, and they should not forget it, *ver. 5.* Observe, 1. That those afflictions which may be truly persecution as far as men are concerned in them, are fatherly rebukes and chastisements as far as God is concerned in them. Persecution for religion, is sometimes a correction and rebuke for the sin of professors of religion. Men persecute them because they are religious; God chastises them because they are not more so: Men persecute them because they will not give up their profession; God chastises them because they have not lived up to their profession.

2. God has directed his people how they ought to behave themselves under all their afflictions; they must avoid the extremes that many run into. 1. They must not despise the chastening of the Lord; they must not make light of afflictions and be stupid and insensible under them; for they are the hand and rod of God, and his rebukes for sin. They that make light of affliction, make light of God, and make light of sin. 2. They must not faint when they are rebuked; they must not despond and sink under their trial, nor fret and repine, but bear up with faith and patience. 3. If they run into either of these extremes, it is a sign they have forgotten their heavenly father's advice and exhortation, which he has given them in true and tender affliction.

3. Afflictions rightly endured, though them may be the fruits of God's displeasure, yet they are proofs of his paternal love to his people, and care for them; *ver. 6, 7.* *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* Observe, 1. The best of God's children need chastisement; they have their faults and follies, which need to be corrected. 2. Though God may let others alone in their sins, he will correct sin in his own children; they are of his family, and shall not escape his rebukes when they want them. 3. That in this he acts as becomes a father, and treats them like children, no wise and good father will wink at those faults in his own children, as he would in others; his relation and his affections oblige him to take more notice of the faults of his own children, than of others. 4. To be suffered to go on in sin without rebuke is a sad sign of alienation from God, such are bastards, not sons. They may call him father, because born in the pale of the church; but they are the spurious offspring of another father, not of God, *ver. 7, 8.*

4. Those that are impatient under the discipline of their heavenly Father, carry it worse towards him, than they would do towards earthly parents, *ver. 9, 10.* Here, 1. The apostle commends a dutiful and submissive behaviour in children towards their earthly parents; we gave them reverence even when they corrected us. It is the duty of children to give the reverence of obedience to the just commands of their parents, and the reverence of submission to their correction when we have been disobedient. Parents have not only authority but a charge from God to give their children correction when it is due, and he has commanded children to take such correction well; and to be stubborn and discontent under due correction is a double fault; for the correction supposes there has been a fault already committed against the parents commanding power, and superadds a farther fault against his chastising power. 2. From hence he recommends an humble and submissive behaviour towards our heavenly Father when under his correction, and this he does by an argument from the less to the greater. 1. Our earthly fathers are but the fathers of our flesh, but God is the father of our spirits: Our fathers on earth were instrumental in the production of our bodies, which are but flesh, a mean, mortal, vile thing, formed out of the dust of the earth, as the bodies of the beasts are; and yet as they are curiously wrought, and made parts of our persons, and a proper tabernacle for the soul to dwell in, and an organ for it to act by, we owe reverence and affection to those that were instrumental in their procreation; but then we must owe much more to him who is the father of our spirits. Our souls are not of a material substance, not of the most refined sort; they are not *ex traduce*; to affirm it is bad philosophy and worse divinity: They are the immediate offspring of God, who after he had formed the body of man out of the earth, breathed into him a vital spirit, and so he became a living soul. 2. Our earthly parents chastened us for their own pleasure. Sometimes they did it to gratify their passion, rather than to reform our manners. This is a weakness the fathers of our flesh are subject to, and this they should carefully watch against; for hereby they dishonour that parental authority that God has put upon them, and very much hinder the efficacy of their chastisement. But the Father of our spirits never grieves willingly, nor afflicts the children of men, much less his own children. It is always for our profit, and the advantage he intends us thereby, is no less than our being partakers of his holiness; it is to correct and cure those sinful disorders that make us unlike to God, and to improve and encrease those graces, which are the image of God in us, that we may be and act more like our heavenly Father. God loves his children so, that he would have them to be as like himself as can be, and for this end he chastises them when they need it. 3. The fathers of our flesh corrected us for a few days, in our state of childhood, when minors; and though we were in that weak and peevish state, we

owed them reverence; and when we came to maturity, we loved and honoured them the more for it. Why, our whole life here is a state of childhood, minority and imperfection, and therefore we must submit to the discipline of such a state, and when we come to a state of perfection, we shall be fully reconciled to all the measures of God's discipline over us now. 4. God's correction is no condemnation; his children may at first fear affliction should come upon that dreadful errand, and we cry, *do not condemn me, but shew me wherefore thou contendest with me,* Job x. 2. But that is so far from being the design of God to his own people, that he therefore *chastens them now, that they may not be condemned with the world,* 1 Cor. xi. 32. He does it to prevent the death and destruction of their souls that they may live to God, and like God, and for ever with him.

5. The children of God under their afflictions ought not to judge of his dealings with them by present sense, but by reason, and faith, and experience, *ver. 11.* *no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness.* Where observe, 1. The judgment of sense in this case: Affliction is not grateful to the sense, but grievous; the flesh will feel them, and be grieved by them, and groan under them. 2. The judgment of faith, which corrects that of sense, and declares that a sanctified affliction produceth the fruits of righteousness; and these fruits are peaceable, tend to the quieting and comforting the soul. Affliction produceth peace, by producing more righteousness; for the fruit of righteousness is peace. And if the pain of the body contribute thus to the peace of the mind, and short present affliction produceth blessed fruits of a long continuance, they have no reason to fret or faint under it, but their great concern is, that the chastening they are under, may be endured by them with patience, and improved to a greater degree of holiness.

1. That their affliction may be endured with patience, which is the main drift of the apostle's discourse on this subject; and he again returns to exhort them, that for the reason before mentioned, they should *lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees,* *ver. 12.* A burthen of affliction is apt to make the Christian's hands hang down, and his knees grow feeble, to dispirit him and discourage him; but this he must strive against, and that for two reasons. 1. That he may the better run his spiritual race and course: Faith, and patience, and holy courage and resolution will make him walk more steadily, keep a straighter path, prevent wavering and wandring. 2. That he may encourage and not discourage others that are in the same way with him. There are many that are in the way to heaven that yet walk but weakly and lamely in it. Such are apt to discourage one another, and hinder one another; but it is their duty to take courage, and act by faith, and so help one another forward in the way to heaven.

2. That their affliction may be improved to a greater degree of holiness. Since this is God's design, it ought to be the design and concern of his children, that with renewed strength and patience, they may *follow peace with all men, and holiness,* *ver. 14.* If the children of God grow impatient under affliction, they will neither walk so quietly and peaceably towards men, nor so piously towards God, as they should do; but faith and patience will enable them to follow peace and holiness too, as a man follows his calling, constantly and diligently, and with pleasure. Observe, 1. It is the duty of Christians, even when in a suffering state, *to follow peace with all men,* yea, even with those that may be instrumental in their sufferings. That is a hard lesson, and an high attainment, but it is what Christ has called his people to. Sufferings are apt to sour the spirit, and sharpen the passions; but the children of God must *follow peace with all men.* 2. Peace and holiness are connected together; there can be no right peace without holiness: There may be prudence and discreet forbearance, and a shew of friendship and good-will to all; but this true Christian peaceableness is never found separate from holiness. We must not under pretence of living peaceably with all men, leave the ways of holiness, but cultivate peace in a way of holiness. 3. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* The vision of God our Saviour in heaven is reserved as the reward of holiness, and the stress of our salvation is laid upon our holiness; though a placid, peaceable disposition contributes much to our meetness for heaven.

6. Where afflictions and sufferings for the sake of Christ are not considered by men as the chastisement of their heavenly Father, and improved as such, they will be a dangerous snare and temptation to apostasy, which every Christian should most carefully watch against: *Ver. 15, 16.* *Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God, &c.* And here the apostle enters a serious caveat against apostasy, and backs it with an awful example. 1. He enters a serious caveat against apostasy, *ver. 15.* Where you may observe, 1. The nature of apostasy; it is *failing of the grace of God*; it is to become bankrupts in religion, for want of a good foundation, and suitable care and diligence; it is *failing of the grace of God*; coming short of a principle of true grace in the soul, notwithstanding the means of grace, and a profession of religion: and so coming short of the love and favour of God here, and hereafter. 2. The consequences of apostasy: Where persons *fail of having the true grace of God, a root of bitterness*, will spring up; corruption will prevail and break forth; a *root of bit-*

bitterness, a bitter root producing bitter fruits to themselves and others ; to themselves corrupt principles, which lead to apostasy ; and are greatly strengthened and radicated by apostasy ; damnable errors, to the corrupting the doctrine and worship of the Christian church, and corrupt practices : Apostates generally grow worse and worse, and fall into the grossest wickedness, which usually ends either in downright atheism, or in despair : And this produces bitter fruits to others, to the churches to whom these men belonged ; by their corrupt principles and practices many are troubled, the peace of the churches broken, and the peace of mens minds disturbed, and *many defiled*, tainted with those bad principles, and drawn into defiling practices ; so that the churches suffer both in their purity and peace. But the apostates themselves will be the greatest sufferers at last.

2. The apostle backs the caution with an awful example, and that is that of Esau ; who, though born within the pale of the church, and having the birthright as the eldest son, and so might have had the privilege of being prophet, priest, and king in his family ; was so profane as to despise these sacred privileges, and to sell his birthright for a morsel of meat. Where observe, 1. Esau's sin ; he profanely despised and sold the birthright, and all the advantages attending it : So apostates, that to avoid persecution, and enjoy sensual ease and pleasure, though they bore the character of the children of God, and had a visible right to the blessing and inheritance, give up all the pretensions thereto. 2. Esau's punishment suitable to his sin : His conscience was convinced of his sin and folly, when it was too late ; *he would afterward have inherited the blessing*, but *he was rejected*, &c. His punishment lay in two things. 1. He was condemned by his own conscience ; he now saw that the blessing he had made so light of, was worth the having, worth the seeking, though with much carefulness, and many tears. 2. He was rejected of God ; *he found no place of repentance* in God, in his father, or of true repentance in his own soul ; the blessing was given to another, even to him to whom he sold it for a morsel of pottage. Esau, in his great wickedness, had made the bargain, and God, in his righteous judgment, ratifies and confirms it, and would not suffer Isaac to reverse it. Learn 1. Apostasy from Christ, is the fruit of preferring the gratification of the flesh before the blessing of God, and the heavenly inheritance. 2. Sinners will not always have such mean thoughts of the divine blessing and inheritance, as now they have. The time is coming, when they will think no pains too great, no cares, no tears too much to obtain the lost blessing. 3. That when the day of grace is over (as sometimes it may be in this life) they will find *no place for repentance* : They cannot repent aright of their sin ; and God will not repent of the sentence he has passed upon them for their sin. And therefore as the design of all, Christians should never give up their title and hope of their Father's blessing and inheritance, and expose themselves to his irrevocable wrath and curse, by deserting their holy religion to avoid suffering ; which, though this may be persecution as far as wicked men are concerned in it, is only a rod of correction and chastisement in the hand of their heavenly Father, to bring them near to himself in conformity and communion. This is the force of the apostles's arguing from the nature of the sufferings of the people of God, even when they suffer for righteousness sake ; and the reasoning is very strong.

18. For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, 19. And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words, which *voice* they that heard, intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more : 20. (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned or thrust through with a dart. 21. And so terrible was the sight, *that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake) 22. But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 23. To the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men, made perfect, 24. And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that* of Abel. 25. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh : For if they escaped not who refused him, that spake on earth, much more *shall not we escape*, if we turn away from him that *speaketh* from heaven : 26. Whose voice then shook the earth : but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. 27. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear. 29. For our God is a consuming fire.

Here the apostle goes on to engage the professing Hebrews to perseverance in their Christian course and conflict, and not to relapse again into Judaism. And this he does by shewing them how much the state of the gospel church differed from that of the Jewish church, and how much it resembles the state of the church in heaven and on both accounts demands and deserves our diligence, patience, and perseverance in Christianity.

1. How much the gospel church differs from the Jewish church, and how much it excels. And here we have a very particular description of the state of the church under the Mosaic dispensation, ver. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22. 1. It was a gross sensible state. Mount Sinai, on which that church state was constituted, was a *mount that might be touched*, ver. 18. a gross palpable place, and so was the dispensation. It was very much external, earthly, and sensitive, and so more heavy. The state of the gospel church on mount Sion is more spiritual, rational and easy. 2. It was a dark dispensation. Upon that mount there was blackness and darkness, and that church state was covered with dark shadows and types ; the gospel state is much more clear and bright. 3. It was a dreadful and terrible dispensation ; the Jews could not bear the terror of it. The thunder and the lightning, the *trumpet* sounding, the *voice* of God himself speaking to them, struck them with such dread, that they *intreated the word should not be so spoken to them any more*, ver. 19. Yea, Moses himself said, *I exceedingly fear and quake*. The best of men on earth are not able to converse immediately with God and his holy angels. The gospel state is mild, and kind, and condescending, suited to our weak frame. 4. It was a limited dispensation ; all might not approach to that mount, but only Moses and Aaron. Under the gospel we have all access with boldness to God. 5. It was a very dangerous dispensation. The mount *burned with fire*, and whatever man or beast touched the mount, they must *be stoned, or thrust through with a dart*, ver. 20. It is true, it will be always dangerous for presumptuous and brutish sinners to draw nigh to God ; but it is not immediate and certain death, as here it was. This was the state of the Jewish church, fitted to awe a stubborn and hard hearted people, and to set forth the strict and tremendous justice of God, and to wean the people of God from that dispensation, and make them more readily to embrace the sweet and gentle oeconomy of the gospel church, and adhere to it.

2. He shews how much the gospel church represents the church triumphant in heaven ; what communication there is between the one and the other. The gospel church is called mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem which is free ; in opposition to mount Sinai, *which tendeth to bondage*, Gal. iv. 24. This was the hill on which God set his king the Messiah. Now in coming to mount Sion, believers come into heavenly places, and into a heavenly society. 1. Into heavenly places ; the city of the living God. God has taken up his gracious residence in the gospel church, which on that account is an emblem of heaven. There his people may find him ruling, guiding, sanctifying and comforting them ; there he speaks to them by the gospel ministry ; there they speak to him by prayer, and he hears them ; there he trains them up for heaven, and gives them the earnest of their inheritance. 2. To the heavenly Jerusalem, as born and bred there ; as free denizens there. Here believers have clearer views of heaven, plainer evidences for heaven, and a greater meetness and more heavenly temper of soul.

2. To a heavenly society. 1. To an innumerable company of angels, who are of the same family with the saints, under the same head, and in a great measure employed in the same work, ministering to believers for their good, and keeping them in all their ways, and pitching their tents about them. These for number are innumerable and for order and union are a company, and a glorious one. And those that by faith are joined to the gospel church, are joined to the angels, and shall at length be like them, and equal with them. 2. To the general assembly, and church of the first-born that are written in heaven, that is, to the universal church, however dispersed. By faith we come to them ; have communion with them in the same head, by the same Spirit, and in the same blessed hope, and walk in the same way of holiness ; grappling with the same spiritual enemies, and hastening to the same rest, victory and glorious triumph ; where will be the general assembly of the first-born, the saints of former and earlier times, who saw the promises of the gospel state, but received them not, as well as those that first received them under the gospel, and were regenerated thereby, and so were the first-born, and the first fruits of the gospel church ; and thereby as the first-born, advanced to greater honours and privileges than the rest of the world : Indeed all the children of God are heirs, and every one hath the privileges of the first-born. The names of these are written in heaven, in the records of the church here ; and a name in God's house, written among the living in Jerusalem ; have a good repute for their faith and fidelity, and enrolled in the Lamb's book of life, as citizens are enrolled in the livery books. 3. To God the judge of all ; that great God who will judge both Jew and Gentile according to the law they are under ; believers come to him now by faith, and make supplication to their judge, and receive a sentence of absolution in the gospel, and in the court of their consciences now, by which they know they shall be justified hereafter. 4. To the spirits of just men made perfect ; to the best sort of men, the righteous, who are more excellent than their neighbours ; to the best part of just men, their spirits, and to the in

in their best state made perfect. Believers have union with departed saints in one and the same head and Spirit, and a title to the same inheritance, of which those on earth are heirs, those in heaven possessors. 5. *To Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant*, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel. This is none of the least of the many encouragements there are to perseverance in the gospel state, since it is a state of communion with Christ the Mediator of the new covenant, and of communication of his blood that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel. 1. The gospel covenant is a new covenant distinct from the covenant of works, and it is now under a new dispensation distinct from that of the Old Testament. 2. Christ is the Mediator of this new covenant; he is the middle person that goes between both parties, God and man; to bring them together in this covenant; to keep them together, notwithstanding the sins of the people, and God's displeasure against them for sin; to offer up our prayers to God, and to bring down the favours of God to us; to plead with God for us, and to plead with us for God; and at length to bring God and his people together in heaven, and to be a mediator of fruition between them for ever; they beholding and enjoying God in Christ, and God beholding and blessing them in Christ. 3. This covenant is ratified by the blood of Christ sprinkled upon our consciences, as the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled upon the altar and the sacrifice. This blood of Christ pacifies God, and purifies the consciences of men. 4. This is speaking blood, and it speaks better things than that of Abel. 1. It speaks to God in behalf of sinners; it pleads not for vengeance, as the blood of Abel did on him that shed it, but for mercy. 2. To sinners, in the name of God it speaks pardon to their sins, peace to their souls; and bespeaks their strictest obedience, and highest love and thankfulness.

Now the apostle having thus enlarged upon the argument to perseverance taken from the heavenly nature of the gospel church state, he closes the chapter by improving the argument in a manner suitable to the weight of it, *ver. 25, &c. See then that ye refuse not him that speaketh*; that speaketh by his blood, and not only speaketh after another manner than the blood of Abel spoke from the ground, but than God spoke by the angels, and by Moses spoke on mount Sinai; then he spoke on earth, now he speaks from heaven. Here observe,

1. That when God speaks to men in the most excellent manner, he justly expects from them the most strict attention and regard. Now it is in the gospel that God speaks to men in the most excellent manner. For, 1. He now speaks from a higher and more glorious seat and throne, not from mount Sinai which was on this earth, but from heaven. 2. He speaks now more immediately by his inspired word, and by his Spirit, which are his witnesses. He speaks not now any new thing to men, but by his Spirit speaks the same word home to the conscience. 3. He speaks now more powerfully and effectually. Then indeed his voice shook the earth, but now by introducing the gospel state, he hath not only shaken the earth, but the heavens; not only shaken the hills and mountains, or the spirits of men, or the civil state of the land of Canaan, to make room for his people: He hath not only shaken the world, as he then did, but he hath shaken the church, that is, the Jewish nation, and shaken them in their church state, which was in Old Testament times a heaven upon earth; this their heavenly spiritual state he hath now shaken. It is by the gospel from heaven that God shook to pieces the civil and ecclesiastical state of the Jewish nation, and introduced a new state of the church that cannot be removed, shall never be changed for any other on earth, but shall remain till it be made perfect in heaven.

2. When God speaks to men in the most excellent manner, the guilt of those that refuse him is the greater, and their punishment will be more unavoidable and intolerable; there is no escaping, no bearing it, *ver. 25*. The different manner of God's dealing with men under the gospel, in a way of grace, assures us, that he will deal with the despisers of the gospel, after a different manner than he does with other men, in a way of judgment. The glory of the gospel, which should greatly recommend it to our regard, appears in these three things: 1. It was by sound of the gospel trumpet, that the former dispensation and state of the church of God was shaken and removed; and shall we despise that voice of God that pulled down a church and state of so long standing, and of God's own building? 2. It was by the sound of the gospel trumpet that a new kingdom is erected for God in the world that can never be so shaken as to be removed: This was a change made once for all, no other change after it, *till time shall be no more*: We have now *received a kingdom that cannot be moved*, shall never be removed, never give way to any new dispensation: The canon of scripture is now perfected, *the Spirit of prophecy is ceased*, the mystery of God finished, he has put his last hand to it: The gospel church may be made more large, more prosperous, more purified from contracted pollution, but it shall never be altered for another dispensation; they that perish under the gospel, perish without remedy: And from hence the apostle justly concludes, (1.) How necessary it is for us to obtain *grace from God to serve him acceptably*: If we be not *accepted of God* under this dispensation, we shall never be accepted at all; and we lose all our labour in religion, if we be not *accepted of God*. (2.) We cannot worship God *acceptably*, unless we worship him with *godly reverence and fear*: As faith, so holy fear is necessary to acceptable worship. (3.) It is only the *grace* of God that

enables us to worship God in a right manner: Nature cannot come up to it; it can neither produce that precious faith, nor that holy fear, that is necessary to acceptable worship. 3. God is the same just and righteous God under the gospel, as he appeared to be under the law; though he be our God in Christ, and now deals with us in a more kind and gracious way, yet he is in himself *a consuming fire*; that is, a God of strict justice, and will avenge himself on all the despisers of his grace, and upon all apostates; and, under the gospel, the justice of God is in a more awful manner, though not in so sensible a manner as under the law; for here we behold divine justice seizing upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and making him a propitiatory sacrifice, his soul and body an offering for sin, which is a display of justice far beyond what was seen and heard on mount Sinai when the law was given.

C H A P. XIII.

The apostle having treated largely of Christ, and faith, and free grace, and gospel privileges, and warned the Hebrews against apostasy, now, in the close of all, recommends several excellent duties to them, as the proper fruits of faith, ver. 1, — 18. then bespeaks their prayers for him, and offers up his prayers to God for them, gives them some hope of seeing himself and Timothy, and ends with the general salutation and benediction, ver. 18. to the end.

1. **L**ET brotherly love continue. 2. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. 3. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being your selves also in the body. 4. Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. 5. *Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have*: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 6. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me. 7. Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. 8. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. 9. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines: for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein. 10. We have an altar whereof they have no right to eat, which serve the tabernacle. 11. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burnt without the camp. 12. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. 13. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. 14. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come. 15. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to his name. 16. But to do good, and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. 17. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit your selves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account: that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

The design of Christ in *giving himself for us*, is that he may purchase to himself a *peculiar people, zealous of good works*. Now the apostle calls the believing Hebrews to the performance of many excellent duties, in which it becomes Christians to excel.

1. To *brotherly love*, *ver. 1*. by which he does not only mean a general affection to all men, as our brethren by nature, all made of the same blood, nor that more limited affection that is due to those that are of the same immediate parents, but that special and spiritual affection which ought to be among the children of God. 1. It is here supposed that the Hebrews had this love one for another, though, at this time, that nation was miserably divided and distracted among themselves, both about matters of religion, and the civil state, yet there was true *brotherly love* left among those of them that believed on Christ; and this appeared in a very eminent manner presently after *the shedding forth of the holy Ghost* when they had all things common, and sold their possessions to make a general fund of subsistence to their brethren: The spirit of Christianity is a spirit of love; *faith works by love*; the true religion is the strongest bond of friendship; if it be not so, it has its name for nothing. 2. This *brotherly love* was in danger of being lost, and that in a time of persecution when it would be most necessary; it was in danger of being lost by those disputes that were among them concerning the respect they ought still to have to the ceremonies of the Mosaic law: Disputes about religion too often produce a decay of Christian affection, but this must be guarded against, and all proper means used to preserve

serve brotherly love : Christians should always love and live as brethren, and the more they grow in devout affection to God, their heavenly Father, the more they will grow in love to one another for his sake.

2. To hospitality, *ver. 2. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers.* We must add to brotherly kindness, charity. Where observe, 1. The duty required, to entertain strangers ; both those that are strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to our persons ; especially those that know themselves to be strangers here, and are seeking another country ; which is the case of the people of God, and was so at this time ; the believing Jews were in a desperate and distressed condition ; but he seems to speak of strangers as such, though we know not who they are, nor whence they come ; yet, seeing they are without any certain dwelling place, we should allow them room in our hearts, and in our houses, as we have opportunity and ability. 2. The motive ; thereby some have entertained angels unawares ; so Abraham did, *Gen. xviii.* and Lot, *Gen. xix.* and one of those that Abraham entertained was the Son of God ; and though we cannot suppose this will ever be our case, yet what we do to strangers in obedience to him, he will reckon and reward as done to himself, *Matt. xxv. 35. I was a stranger, and ye took me in.* God has often bestowed honours and favours upon his hospitable servants, beyond all their thoughts, unawares.

3. To Christian sympathy, *ver. 3. Remember those that are in bonds, &c.* where observe, 1. The duty, to remember those that are in bonds, and in adversity. God oftentimes orders it so, that while some Christians and churches are in adversity, others enjoy peace and liberty : All are not called at the same time to resist unto blood : Those that are themselves at liberty, must sympathize with those that are in bonds and adversity, as if they were bound with them in the same chain : They must feel the sufferings of their brethren.

2. The reason of the duty, as being yourselves in the body ; not only in the body natural, and so liable to the like sufferings ; and you should sympathize with them now, that others may sympathize with you when your time of trial comes ; but in the same mystical body, under the same head ; and if one member suffer, all the rest suffer with it, *1 Cor. xii. 26.* It would be unnatural in Christians not to bear each others burthens.

4. To purity and chastity, *ver. 4.* where you have, 1. A commendation of God's ordinance of marriage, that it is honourable in all, and ought to be so esteemed by all, and not denied to those to whom God has not denied it ; it is honourable, for God instituted it for man in paradise, knowing it was not good for him to be alone ; he married and blessed the first couple, the first parents of mankind, to direct all to look unto God in that great concern, and to marry in the Lord : Christ honoured marriage with his presence, and first miracle ; it is honourable, as a means to prevent impurity, and a defiled bed ; it is honourable, and happy, when persons come together pure and chaste, and preserve the marriage bed undefiled, not only from unlawful, but inordinate affections. 2. A dreadful, but just censure of impurity and lewdness ; whoremongers and adulterers God will judge. 1. God knows who are guilty of such sins, no darkness can hide from him. 2. He will call such sins by their proper names, not by the names of love and gallantry, but of whoredom and adultery ; whoredom in the single state, and adultery in the married state. 3. He will bring them into judgment, he will judge them, either by their own consciences here, and set their sins in order before them, for their deep humiliation, and conscience, when awakened, will be very severe upon such sinners ; or he will set them at his tribunal at death, and the last day, and convict them, and condemn them, and cast them out for ever, if they die under the guilt of this sin.

5. To Christian contentment, *ver. 5, 6.* where observe, 1. The sin that is contrary to this grace and duty, and that is covetousness, an over eager desire of the wealth of this world, envying those that have more than we ; this sin we must allow no place in our conversation ; for though it be a secret lust lurking in the heart, if it be not subdued, it will enter into our conversation, and discover itself in our manner of speaking and acting ; we must take care not only to keep this sin down, but to root it out of our souls. 2. The duty and grace that is contrary to covetousness, and that is being satisfied and pleased with such things as we have, present things, for past things cannot be recalled, and future things are only in the hand of God ; what God gives us from day to day, we must be content with it, though it fall short of what we have enjoyed heretofore, and though it do not come up to our expectations for the future, we must be content with our present lot, we must bring our minds to our present condition, and this is the sure way to contentment ; and they that cannot do it, would not be contented, though God should raise their condition to their minds, for the mind would rise with the condition : Haman was the great court favourite, and yet not contented ; Ahab on the throne, and yet not contented ; Adam in paradise, and yet not contented ; yea, the angels in heaven, and yet not contented ; but Paul, though abased and empty, had learned in every state, in any state, therewith to be content. 3. What reason Christians have to be contented with their present lot : 1. God hath said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,* *ver. 5, 6.* This was said to Joshua, chap. i. 5. but belongs to all the faithful servants of God ; Old Testament promises may be applied to New Testament saints ; this promise contains the sum and sub-

stance of all the promises ; *I will never, no, never, leave thee, nor ever forsake thee.* Here are no less than five negatives heaped together to confirm the promise ; the true believer shall have the gracious presence of God with him in life, at death, and for ever. 2. From this comprehensive promise they may assure themselves of help from God, *ver. 6. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me.* Men can do nothing against God, and God can make all that men do against his people to turn to their good.

6. To the duty Christians owe to their ministers, and that both to those that are dead, and to those that are yet alive.

1. To those that are dead, *ver. 7. Remember them that have had the rule of you, &c.* Where observe, (1.) The description given of them ; they were such as had the rule over them, and had spoken to them the word of God ; their guides and governors, who had spoken to them the word of God. Here is the dignity to which they were advanced, to be rulers and leaders of the people, not according to their own will, but the will and word of God ; and this character they filled up with suitable duty : They did not rule at a distance, and rule by others, but they ruled by personal presence and instruction, according to the word of God. (2.) The duty owing to them, even when they were dead : 1. Remember them, their preaching, their praying, their private counsel, their example. 2. Follow their faith, be steadfast in the profession of that faith they preached to you, and labour after that grace of faith by which they lived and died so well : Consider the end of their conversation, how quickly, how comfortably, how joyfully they finished their course !

Now this duty of following the same true faith, in which they had been instructed, the apostle enlargeth much upon, and presseth them earnestly to it, not only from the remembrance of their faithful deceased guides, but from several other motives :

(1.) From the immutability and eternity of the Lord Jesus Christ : Though their ministers were some dead, others dying, yet the great Head and High-priest of the church, the Bishop of their souls, ever lives, and is ever the same ; and they should be steadfast and unmoveable, in imitation of Christ, and should remember that Christ ever lives to observe and reward their faithful adherence to his truths, and to observe and punish their sinful departure from him : Christ is the same in the Old Testament day, in the gospel day, and will be so to his people for ever.

(2.) From the nature and tendency of those erroneous doctrines that they were in danger of falling in with : 1. They were divers and various, *ver. 9.* different from what they had received from their former faithful teachers, and inconsistent with themselves. 2. They were strange doctrines : They were strange doctrines, such as the gospel church was unacquainted with, foreign to the gospel. 3. They were of an unsettling, distracting nature, like the wind by which the ship is tossed, and in danger of being driven from its anchor, and carried away, and split upon the rocks : They were quite contrary to that grace of God that fixes and establishes the heart, which is an excellent thing : These strange doctrines keep the heart always fluctuating and unsettled. 4. They are mean and low as to their subject, they are about external, little, perishing things, such as meat and drinks, &c. 5. They were unprofitable ; those that were most taken with them, and employed about them, got no real good by them to their own souls ; they did not make them more holy, nor more humble, nor more thankful, nor more heavenly. 6. They would exclude those that embraced them from the privileges of the Christian altar, *ver. 10. We have an altar, &c.* This is an argument of great weight, and therefore the apostle insists the longer upon it. Observe,

1. The Christian church has its altar : It was objected against the primitive Christians that their assemblies were destitute of an altar, but that was not true : We have an altar, not a material altar, but a personal one, and that is Christ ; he is both our altar, and our sacrifice ; he sanctifies the gift : The altars under the law were types of Christ ; the brazen altar of the sacrifice, the golden altar of his intercession.

2. This altar furnishes out a feast for true believers, a feast upon the sacrifice, a feast of fat things ; spiritual strength, and growth, and holy delight, and pleasure : The Lord's table is not our altar, but it is furnished with provision from the altar ; Christ our passover for us, *1 Cor. v. 7.* and it follows, therefore let us keep the feast : The Lord's supper is the feast of the gospel passover.

3. Those that adhere to the tabernacle, or the Levitical dispensation, or return to it again, exclude themselves from the privileges of this altar, from the benefits purchased by Christ : If they serve the tabernacle, they are resolved to subject themselves to antiquated rites and ceremonies, to renounce their right to the Christian altar ; and this part of the argument he first proves, and then improves : (1.) He proves that this servile adherence to the Jewish state is a bar to the privileges of the gospel altar ; and he argues thus under the Jewish law ; no part of the sin-offering was to be eaten, but all must be burnt without the camp while they dwell in tabernacles, and without the gates when they dwell in cities : Now if they will still be subject to that law, they cannot eat at the gospel altar ; for that which is eaten there, is furnished from Christ, who is the great sin-offering : Not that it is the very sin-offering itself, as the Papists affirm ; for then it was not to be eaten, but burnt ; but the gospel feast is the fruit and procurement of the sacrifice, which they have no

right to, that do not acknowledge the sacrifice itself: And that it might appear that Christ was really the antitype of the sin-offering, and, as such, might sanctify or cleanse his people with his own blood, he conformed himself to the type in suffering without the gate: A great degree this was of his humiliation, as if he had not been fit either for sacred or civil society! And this shews, how sin, which was the meritorious cause of the sufferings of Christ, is a forfeiture of all sacred and civil rights, and the sinner a common plague and nuisance to all society, if God should be strict to mark iniquity. And having thus shewed that adherence to the Levitical law would, even according to its own rules, debar men from the Christian altar; he proceeds, (2.) To improve this argument, *ver.* 13, 14, 15. in suitable advices. 1. *Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp; go forth from the ceremonial law, from sin, from the world, from ourselves, our very bodies, when he calls us:* 2. Let us be willing to bear his reproach, be willing to be accounted the off-scouring of all things, not worthy to live, not worthy to die a common death: This was his reproach, and we must submit to it; and we have the more reason, because, whether we go forth from this world to Christ or no, we must necessarily go forth in a little time by death; for here we have no continuing city; sin, sinners, death, will not suffer us to continue long here; and therefore we should go forth now by faith, and seek in Christ that rest and settlement that this world cannot afford us, *ver.* 14. 3. Let us make a right use of this altar; not only partake of the privileges of it, but discharge the duties of the altar, as those that Christ has made priests to attend on this altar: Let us bring our sacrifices to this altar, and to this our High-priest, and offer them up by him, *ver.* 15, 16. Now what are the sacrifices which we must bring and offer on this altar, even Christ? not any expiatory sacrifices, there is no need of them, Christ has offered the great sacrifice of atonement, ours are only the sacrifices of acknowledgment, and they are, 1. The sacrifice of praise to God, which we should offer up to God continually: In this is included all adoration and prayer, as well as thanksgiving; this is the fruit of our lips; we must speak forth the praises of God from unfeigned lips; and this must be only offered to God, not to angels, or saints, or any creature, but to the name of God alone; and it must be by Christ, in a dependence upon his meritorious satisfaction and intercession. 2. The sacrifice of alms deeds, and Christian charity, *ver.* 16. To do good, and to communicate, forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. We must, according to our power, communicate to the necessities of the souls and bodies of men; not contenting ourselves to offer the sacrifice of our lips, meer words, but the sacrifice of good deeds: And these we must lay down upon this altar, not depending upon the merit of our good deeds, but of our great High-priest; and with such sacrifices as these, adoration and alms thus offered up, God is well pleased; he will accept the offering with pleasure, and will accept and bless the offerers through Christ.

2. Having thus told us the duty Christians owe to their deceased ministers, which principally consists in following their faith, and not departing from it; the apostle tells us what is the duty that people owe to their living ministers, in *ver.* 17. and the reasons of that duty: 1. The duty, to obey them, and submit themselves to them. It is not an implicit obedience, nor absolute submission, that is here required, but only so far as is agreeable to the mind and will of God revealed in his word; and yet it is truly obedience and submission, and that not only to God, but to the authority of the ministerial office, which is of God; as certainly in all things belonging to that office, as the authority of parents, or the civil magistrate, in the things within their sphere: Christians must submit to be instructed by their ministers, and not think themselves too wise, or too good, or too great to learn from them; and when they find that ministerial instructions are agreeable to the written word, they must obey them. 2. The motives to this duty: (1.) They have the rule over the people; their office, though not magisterial, yet is truly authoritative; they have no authority to lord it over the people, but to lead them in the ways of God, by informing and instructing them, explaining the word of God to them, and applying it to their several cases; they are not to make laws of their own, but to interpret the laws of God; nor is their interpretation to be immediately received without examination, but the people must search the scriptures, and so far as the instructions of their ministers are according to that rule, they ought to receive them, not as the word of men, but, as they are indeed, the word of God, that works effectually in those that believe. (2.) They watch for the souls of the people, not to ensnare them, but to save them; not to gain them to themselves, but to Christ; to build them up in knowledge, faith, and holiness; they are to watch against every thing that may be hurtful to the souls of men, and to give them warning of dangerous errors, of the devices of Satan, of approaching judgments; they are to watch for all opportunities of helping the souls of men forward in the way to heaven. (3.) They must give an account how they have discharged their duty, and what is become of the souls committed to their trust, whether any have been lost through their neglect, and whether any of them have been brought in, and built up, under their ministry. (4.) They would be glad to give a good account of themselves, and their hearers: If they can then give in an account of their own fidelity and success, it will be a joyful day to them; those souls that have been converted and confirmed under their ministry, will be

their joy, and their crown, in the day of the Lord Jesus. (5.) If they give up their account with grief, it will be the peoples loss as well as theirs: It is the interest of hearers, that the account their ministers give of them may be with joy, and not with grief: If faithful ministers be not successful, the grief will be theirs, but the loss will be the peoples: Faithful ministers have delivered their own souls, but a fruitless and faithless peoples blood and ruin will be upon their own heads.

18. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. 19. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner. 20. Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21. Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. 22. And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation; for I have written a letter unto you in few words. 23. Know ye, that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you. 24. Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you. 25. Grace be with you all. Amen.

Here, 1. The apostle recommends himself, and his fellow-sufferers, to the prayers of the Hebrew believers, *ver.* 18. Pray for us; for me, and Timothy, mentioned *ver.* 23. and for all those of us that labour in the ministry of the gospel. (1.) This is one part of the duty people owe to their ministers; they need the prayers of the people; and the more earnestly the people pray for their ministers, the more benefit they may expect to reap from their ministry; they should pray that God would teach those that are to teach them, that he would make them vigilant, and wise, and zealous, and successful; that he would assist them in all their labours, support them under all their burthens, and strengthen them under all their temptations. (2.) There are good reasons why people should pray for their ministers; he mentions two: 1. We trust we have a good conscience, &c. *ver.* 18. Many of the Jews had an ill opinion of Paul, because, he being a Hebrew of the Hebrews, had cast off the Levitical law, and preached up Christ: Now he here modestly asserts his own integrity: We trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. We trust, he might have said, we know, but he chose to speak in an humble stile, to teach us all not to be too confident of ourselves, but to maintain a godly jealousy over our own hearts: We trust we have a good conscience, an enlightened and well-informed conscience, a clean and pure conscience, a tender and faithful conscience, a conscience testifying for us, not against us; a good conscience in all things, in the duties both of the first and second table, towards God, and towards men; and especially in all things pertaining to our ministry, we would act honestly and sincerely in all things. Observe, (1.) A good conscience has respect to all God's commands, and all our duty. (2.) That those that have this good conscience, yet need the prayers of others. (3.) Conscientious ministers are publick blessings, and deserve the prayers of the people. 2. Another reason why he desires their prayers is, that he hoped thereby to be the sooner restored to them, *ver.* 19. intimating, he had been formerly among them; that now he was absent from them; that he had a great desire, and real intention, to come again to them; and that the best way to facilitate his return to them, and to make it a mercy to him and them, was to make it the matter of their prayer. When ministers come to a people as a return of prayer, they come with greater satisfaction to themselves, and success to the people. We should fetch in all our mercies by prayer.

2. He offers up his prayers to God for them, being willing to do for them as he desired they should do for him: *ver.* 20. Now the God of peace, &c. In this excellent prayer, observe, 1. The title given to God, the God of peace, who has found out a way for peace and reconciliation between himself and sinners, and who loves peace on earth, and especially in his churches. 2. The great work ascribed to him. He hath brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, &c. Jesus raised himself by his own power; and yet the Father was concerned in it, attesting thereby that justice was satisfied, and the law fulfilled. He rose again for our justification, and that divine power by which he was raised, is able to do every thing for us, that we stand in need of. 3. The titles given to Christ; our Lord Jesus, our sovereign, and our saviour, and the great shepherd of the sheep, promised in *Isa.* xl. 11. declared by himself to be so, *John* x. 14, 15. Ministers are under-shepherds, Christ is the great shepherd. This denotes his interest in his people; they are the flock of his pasture, and his care and concern for them; he feeds them, and leads them, and watches over them. 4. The way and method in which God is reconciled, and Christ raised from the dead, through the blood of the everlasting covenant. The blood of Christ satisfied divine justice, and so procured Christ's release from the prison of the grave, as having paid our debt, according to an eternal covenant or agreement between the Father and the Son; and this blood is the sanction and seal of an everlasting covenant between God and his people. 5. The mercy prayed for, *ver.* 21. Make you perfect in every

every good word, &c. Observe, 1. The perfection of the saints in every good work, is the great thing desired by them, and for them, that they may here have a perfection of integrity, a clear mind, a clean heart, lively affections, regular and resolved wills, and suitable strength for every good work to which they are called now; and at length a perfection of degrees to fit them for the employment and felicity of heaven. 2. The way in which God makes his people perfect; it is by working in them always what is pleasing in his sight, and that through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever. Observe. 1. There is no good thing wrought in us, but it is the work of God; he works in us, before we are fit for any good work. 2. No good thing is wrought in us by God, but through Jesus Christ, for his sake, and by his Spirit. And therefore, 3. Eternal glory is due to him, who is the cause of all the good principles wrought in us, and all the good works done by us: And to this every one should say amen.

3. He gives the Hebrews an account of Timothy's liberty, and hopes of seeing them with him in a little time, ver. 23. It seems Timothy had been a prisoner, doubtless, for the gospel, but now he was set at liberty. The imprisonment of faithful ministers is an honour to them, and their enlargement matter of joy to the people; he was pleased with the hopes of not only seeing Timothy, but

seeing the Hebrews with him. Opportunities of writing to the churches of Christ, are desired by the faithful ministers of Christ, and pleasant to them.

4. Having given a brief account of this his letter, and begged their attention to it, ver. 22. closes with salutations, and a solemn, though short benediction.

1. The salutation. 1. From himself to them directed to all their ministers that had rule over them, and to all the saints; to them, all ministers and people. 2. From the Christians in Italy to them. It is a good thing to have the law of holy love and kindness wrote in the hearts of Christians one towards another. Religion teaches men the trust, civility, and good breeding. It is not a four or morose thing.

2. The solemn, though short benediction, ver. 25. Grace be with you all. Amen. Let the favour of God be towards, and his grace continually working in you, and with you, bringing forth the fruits of holiness, as the first-fruits of glory. When the people of God have been conversing together by word or writing, it is good to part with prayer, desiring for each other the continuance of the gracious presence of God, that they may meet together again in the world of praise.



A N

EXPOSITION

OF THE

General Epistle of JAMES,

With Practical Observations.

The writer of this epistle was not James the son of Zebedee: For he was put to death by Herod, Acts xii. before Christianity had gained so much ground among the Jews of the dispersion, as is here implied. But it was the other James, the son of Alphaeus; who was cousin-german to Christ, and one of the twelve apostles, Mat. x. 3. He is called a pillar, Gal. ii. 9. And this epistle of his cannot be disputed, without loosening a foundation stone.

It is called a general epistle, because (as some think) not directed to any particular person or church; but such a one as we call a circular letter. Others think it is called general or catholick, to distinguish it from the epistles of Ignatius, Barnabas, Polycarp, and others that were noted in the primitive times, but not generally received in the church, and on that account not canonical as this is. Eusebius tells us, that this Epistle was generally read in the churches with the other catholick epistle. Hist. Eccles. pag. 53. Ed. Val. Anno 1678. St. James, our author, was called the just, for his great piety. He was an eminent example of those graces which he presses upon others. He was so exceedingly revered for his justice, temperance, and devotion, that Josephus the Jewish historian records it as one of the causes of the destruction of Jerusalem, "That St. James was martyred in it". This is mentioned in hope of procuring the greater regard to what is penned by so holy and excellent a man.

The time when this epistle was written is uncertain. The design of it, is, to reprove Christians for their degeneracy both in faith and manners; and to prevent the spreading of those libertine doctrines, which threatened the destruction of all practical godliness. (Particulars shall be laid down in the contents at the beginning of each chapter.) It was also a special intention of the author of this epistle, to awaken the Jewish nation to a sense of the greatness and nearness of those judgments which were coming upon them; and to support all true Christians in the way of their duty, under those calamities and persecutions they might meet with. The truths laid down are very momentous and necessary to be maintained; and the rules for practice as here stated, are such as ought to be observed, in our times as well as in preceding ages.

CHAP. I.

After the inscription and salutation, ver. 1. Christians are taught how to carry it when under the cross. Several graces and duties are recommended; and those who endure their trials and afflictions as the apostle here directs, are pronounced blessed, and are assured of a glorious reward, ver. 2,—12. But those sins which bring sufferings, or those weaknesses and faults men are chargeable with under them, are by no means to be imputed to God; who cannot be the author of sin, but is the author of all good, ver. 13,—18. All passion and rash anger, and vile affections ought to be suppressed. The word of God should be made our chief study: And what we hear and know of it, we must take care to practise; otherwise our religion will prove but a vain thing. To which is added an account, wherein pure religion consists, ver. 19,—27.

JAMES a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad greeting. 2. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; 3. Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. 4. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. 5. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. 6. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering: for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. 7. For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. 8. A double minded man is unstable in all his

ways. 9. Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted : 10. But the rich, in that he is made low : because as the flower of the grass he shall pass away. 11. For the sun is *no sooner* risen with a burning heat, *but* it withereth the grass, and the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of it perisheth : so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways. 12. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.

We are here to consider, first the inscription of this epistle, and then the matter of it.

The inscription has three principal parts.

1. The character by which our author desires to be known. *James a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ.* Though he was a prime minister in Christ's kingdom, yet he styles himself only a servant. Note hence, that those who are highest in office or attainments in the church of Christ, yet are but servants. They should not therefore act as masters, but as ministers. Farther, though St. James is called by the evangelist, the brother of our Lord, yet it was his glory to serve Christ in the spirit, rather than to boast of his being a-kin according to the flesh. From hence let us learn to prize this title above all others in the world, *the servants of God and of Christ.* Again, it is to be observed that St. James professes himself a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to teach us that in all services we should have an eye to the Son as well as the Father. We cannot acceptably serve the Father unless we are also servants of the Son. God will have *all men to honour the Son as they honour the Father*, John v. 23. looking for acceptance in Christ, and assistance from him, and yielding all obedience to him ; thus *confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

2. The apostle here mentions the conditions of those to whom he writes. *The twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.* Some understand this of the dispersion upon the persecution of Stephen, Acts viii. But that only reached to Judea and Samaria. Others by the Jews of the dispersion understand those that were in Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, and other kingdoms into which their wars had driven them. The greatest part indeed of ten of the twelve tribes were lost in captivity ; but yet some of every tribe were preserved, and are still honoured with the ancient title of twelve tribes. These however were scattered and dispersed. 1. They were dispersed in mercy. Having the scriptures of the Old Testament, the providence of God so ordered it, that they were scattered in several countries for the diffusing of the light of divine revelation. 2. They began now to be scattered in wrath. The Jewish nation was crumbling into parties and factions ; and many were forced to leave their own country, as being now grown too hot for them. Even good people among them shared in the common calamity. 3. These Jews of the dispersion were those that had embraced the *Christian faith.* They were persecuted and forced to seek for shelter in other countries ; the Gentiles being kinder to Christians than the Jews were. Note here, that it is often the lot even of God's own tribes to be scattered abroad. The gathering day is reserved for the end of time ; when all the dispersed children of God shall be gathered together to Christ their head. In the mean time, while God's tribes are scattered abroad, he will send to look after them. Here is an apostle writing to the scattered ; an epistle from God to them, when driven away from his temple, and seemingly neglected by him. Apply here that of the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xi. 16. *Thus saith the Lord God, although I have cast them far off among the heathen, and although I have scattered them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little sanctuary in the countries where they shall come.* God hath a particular care of his outcasts. *Let mine outcasts dwell with thee, Moab.* Isa. xvi. 3, 4.

God's tribes may be scattered ; therefore we should not value ourselves too much on outward privileges. And, on the other hand, we should not despond and think ourselves rejected, under outward calamities ; because God does remember and send comfort to his scattered people.

3. St. James here shews the respect he had even for the dispersed. Greeting, saluting them, wishing peace and salvation to them. True Christians should not be the less valued for their hardships. It was the desire of this apostle's heart, that those who were scattered yet might be comforted. That they might do well and fare well, and be enabled to rejoice even in their distresses. God's people have reason to rejoice in all places, and at all times ; as will abundantly appear from what follows.

We next come to consider the matter of this epistle. And in the verses now before us we have these following things to be observed.

I. The suffering state of Christians in this world is represented. And that in a very instructive manner, if we attend to what is plainly and necessarily implied, together with what is fully expressed.

1. It is implied, that *troubles and afflictions* may be the lot of the best Christians ; even of those who have the most reason to think and hope well of themselves. Such as have a title to the greatest joy, yet may endure very grievous afflictions. As good people are liable

to be scattered, they must not think it strange, if they meet with troubles.

2. These outward afflictions and troubles are *temptations to them.* The devil endeavours by sufferings and crosses to draw men to sin, and deter them from duty, or unfit them for it : But as our afflictions are in God's hand, they are intended for the trial and improvement of our graces. The gold is put into the furnace that it may be purified.

3. These temptations may be *numerous and various.* Divers temptations, as the apostle speaks. Our trials may be of many and different kinds, and therefore we have need to put on the whole armour of God. We must be armed on every side, because temptations lie on all sides.

4. The trials of a good man are such as he does not *create to himself*, or *sinfully pull upon himself* ; but they are such as he is said to *fall into.* And for this reason they are the better borne by him.

II. The graces and duties of a state of trial, and affliction, are here pointed out to us. And could we attend to these things, and grow in them as we should do, how good would it be for us to be afflicted !

1. Christian grace to be exercised, is joy. *Count it all joy*, ver.

2. We must not sink into a sad and disconsolate frame of mind, that would make us faint under our trials ; but must endeavour to keep our spirits dilated and enlarged, the better to take in a true sense of our case, and with greater advantage to set ourselves to make the best of it. Philosophy may instruct men to be calm under their troubles ; but Christianity teaches them to be joyful ; because such exercises proceed from love, and not fury in God. In them we are conformable to Christ our head, and they become marks of our adoption ; and by suffering in the ways of righteousness, we are serving the interests of our Lord's kingdom among men, and edifying the body of Christ. And our trials will brighten our graces now, and our crown at last. Therefore there is reason *to count it all joy*, when trials and difficulties become our lot in the way of our duty. And this is not purely a New Testament paradox, but even in Job's time it was said, *behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth.* There is the more reason for joy in afflictions, if we consider the other graces that are promoted by them.

2. Faith is a grace that one expression supposes, and another expressly requires : *Knowing this, that the trial of your faith*, ver. 3. And then in ver. 5. Let him *ask in faith.* There must be a sound believing of the great truths of Christianity, and a resolute cleaving to them in times of trial. That faith which is spoken of here as tried by afflictions, consists in a belief of the power, and word, and promise of God ; and in fidelity and constancy to the Lord Jesus.

3. There must be *patience* : *The trial of faith worketh patience* : Trying of one grace produces another ; and the more the suffering graces of a Christian are exercised, the stronger they grow : *Tribulation worketh patience*, Rom. v. 3. Now to exercise Christian patience aright, we must, 1. *Let it work.* It is not a stupid, but an active thing : A Stoical apathy, and a Christian patience, are very different : By the one men become, in some measure, insensible of their afflictions ; but by the other they become triumphant in, and over them. Let us take care, in times of trial, that *patience*, and not passion, be set at work in us : Whatever is said, or done, let *patience* have the saying and doing of it : Do not let the indulging of our passions hinder the operation and noble effects of *patience* ; give it leave to work, and it will work wonders in a time of trouble. 2. We must *let it have its perfect work* : Do nothing to limit it, or to weaken it ; but let it have its full scope : If one affliction come upon the heels of another, and a train of them are drawn upon us, yet let *patience* go on till its work is perfected. When we bear all that God appoints, and as long as he appoints, and with an humble, obedient eye to him, and when we not only bear troubles, but rejoice in them, then *patience hath its perfect work.* 3. When the work of *patience* is compleat, then the Christian is *entire*, and *nothing* will be *wanting* : It will furnish us with all that is necessary for our Christian race and warfare, and will enable us to persevere to the end, and then its work will be ended, and crowned with glory : After we have abounded in other graces, we *have need of patience*, Heb. x. 36. But *let patience have its perfect work, and we shall be perfect, and entire, wanting nothing.*

4. Prayer is a duty recommended also to suffering Christians ; and here the apostle shews, 1. What we ought more especially to pray for ; *wisdom.* *If any lack wisdom, let him ask of God.* We should not pray so much for the removal of an affliction, as for wisdom to make a right use of it. And who is there that does not want wisdom, under any great trials or exercises, to guide him, both in his judging of things, and in the conduct of his own spirit and temper, and in the management of his affairs ? To be wise in trying times is a special gift of God, and to him we must seek for it.

2. In *what way this is to be obtained*, namely, upon our petitioning or asking for it. Let the foolish become beggars at a throne of grace, and they are in a fair way to be wise. It is not said, let such ask of man, no not of any man, but let him ask of God, who made him and gave him his understanding and reasonable powers at first. And of him, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Let us confess our want of wisdom to God, and daily

ask

ask it of him. 3. We have the *greatest encouragement* to do this, *he giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not*. Yea it is expressly promised *it shall be given*, ver. 5. Here is something in answer to every discouraging turn of the mind, when we go to God, under a sense of our own weakness and folly, to ask for wisdom. He to whom we are sent, we are sure has it to give. And he is of a giving disposition, inclined to bestow this upon those that ask. And no fear of his favours being limited to some in this case, so as to exclude others, or any humble petitioning soul; for *he gives to all men*. And if you should say you want a *great deal* of wisdom, a small portion will not serve your turn: Why, *he gives liberally*. And lest you should be afraid of going to him unseasonably, or being put to shame for your folly; it is added, *he upbraideth not*. Ask when you will, and as often as you will, you will meet with no upbraidings. And if, after all, any should say, this may be the case with some, but I fear I shall not succeed so well in my seeking for wisdom as some others may; let such consider how particular and express the promise is, *it shall be given him*. Justly then must fools perish in their foolishness, if wisdom may be had for asking, and they will not pray to God for it. But, 4. There is *one thing necessary to be observed in our asking*, namely, that we do it with a believing, *steady mind*, ver. 6. *Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering*. The promise above is very sure, taking this proviso along with us; wisdom shall be given to those that ask it of God, provided they believe that God is able to make the simple, wise; and is faithful to make good his word to those that apply to him. This was the condition Christ insisted on, in treating with those that came to him for healing: *Believest thou that I am able to do this?* There must be *no wavering*, no staggering at the promise of God through unbelief, or through a sense of any disadvantages that lie on our own part. Here therefore we see,

5. That oneness, and sincerity of intention, and a *steadiness of mind*, is another duty required under affliction. He that *wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed*. To be sometimes lifted up by faith, and then thrown down again by distrust; to mount sometimes towards the heavens, with an intention to secure glory, and honour, and immortality; and then to sink again in seeking the ease of the body, or the enjoyments of *this world*; this is very fitly and elegantly compared to a *wave of the sea*, that rises and falls, swells and sinks, just as the wind tosses it higher or lower, that way or this. A mind that has but one single and prevailing regard to its spiritual and eternal interest, and that keeps steady in its purposes for God, will grow wise by afflictions, will continue fervent in its devotions, and will be superior to all trials and oppositions. Now for the cure of a *wavering spirit*, and a *weak faith*, the apostle shews the ill effects of these; 1. In that the *success of prayer is spoiled hereby*, ver. 7. *Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord*. Such a distrustful, shifting, unsettled person, is not likely to value a favour from God as he should do, and therefore cannot expect to receive it. In asking for divine and heavenly wisdom we are never like to prevail, if we have not a heart to prize it above rubies and the greatest things in this world. 2. A wavering faith and spirit has an *ill influence* upon our *conversations*, ver. 8. *A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways*. When our faith and spirits rise and fall with second causes, there will be great unsteadiness in all our conversation and actions. This may sometimes expose men to contempt in the world; but it is certain such ways cannot please God, nor procure any good for us in the end. While we have but one God to trust to, we have but one God to be governed by, and this should keep us even and steady. He that is *unstable as water*, shall not excel. Hereupon,

III. The *holy, humble temper* of a Christian both in advancement and debasement is described: And both poor and rich are directed on what grounds to build their joy and comfort, ver. 9, 10, 11.

Here we may observe, 1. That those of *low degree*, are to be looked upon as brethren. *Let the brother of low degree, &c.* Poverty does not destroy the relation among Christians.

2. Observe also, that good Christians may *be rich in the world*, ver. 10. *Grace and wealth* are not wholly inconsistent. Abraham, the father of the faithful, was rich in silver and gold.

3. Observe that both these are allowed to rejoice. No condition of life puts us out of a capacity of rejoicing in God. If we do not rejoice in him always, it is our own fault. Those of low degree may rejoice, if they are exalted to be *rich in faith*, and *heirs of the kingdom of God*, (as Dr. Whitby explains this place.) And the rich may rejoice in humbling providences, as they produce a *lowly and humble disposition* of mind, which is highly valuable in the sight of God. Where any are made poor for righteousness sake, their very poverty is their exaltation. It is an honour to be dishonoured for the sake of Christ. *To you it is given to suffer*, Phil. i. 29. All that are brought low, and made lowly by grace, may rejoice in the prospect of their exaltation at last in heaven.

4. Observe what reason *rich people* have, notwithstanding their riches, to be *humble and low in their own eyes*. Because both they and their riches are passing away. *As the flower of grass he shall pass away*. He, and his wealth with him, ver. 11. *For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass*. Note hence, that worldly wealth is a withering thing. Riches are too uncertain (says Mr. Baxter on this place) too inconsiderable things to make any great or just alteration in our minds. As a flower fades

before the heat of the scorching sun, *so shall the rich man fade away in his ways*. His projects, counsels, managements for this world are called his ways here: In these he shall *fade away*. For this reason let him that is rich rejoice, not so much in the providence of God that makes him rich, as in the grace of God that makes and keeps him humble; and in those trials and exercises that teach him to seek his felicity in and from God, and not from these perishing enjoyments.

IV. A blessing is pronounced on those who *endure their exercises* and trials, as here directed, ver. 12. *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation*. Observe, 1. It is not the man that *suffers only* who is blessed, but he that *endures*; who with patience and constancy goes through all difficulties in the way of his duty. Observe, 2. That afflictions cannot make us miserable, if it be not our own fault. A blessing may arise from them, and we may be blessed in them. They are so far from *taking away* a good man's felicity, that they really increase it. Observe, 3. That sufferings and temptations are the way to *eternal blessedness*. *When he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life*, *δοξασθαι ζωῆς αἰώνου*, when he is approved; when his graces are found to be true, and of the highest worth: (So metals are tried as to their excellency by the fire.) And his integrity is manifested, and all is approved of the great Judge. Note hence, that to be approved of God is the great aim of a Christian in all his trials; and it will be his *blessedness at last*, when he shall receive the crown of life. The tried Christian shall be a crowned one: And the crown he shall wear will be a crown of life. It will be life and bliss to him, and it will last for ever. We only bear the cross for a while, but we shall wear the crown to eternity.

4. Observe, That this blessedness and crown of life, is a *promised thing* to the righteous sufferer. It is therefore what we may most surely depend upon: For when *heaven and earth shall pass away*, this word of God shall *not fail of being fulfilled*. But withal, let us take notice that our future reward comes not as a debt, but by a gracious promise.

5. Observe, That our enduring temptations must be from a *principle of love* to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ, or otherwise we are not interested in this promise. *The Lord hath promised to them that love him*. St. Paul supposes that a man may for some point of religion even give *his body to be burnt*, and yet not be pleasing to God, nor regarded by him, because of his want of charity, or a prevailing sincere love to God and man, 1 Cor. xiii. 3.

6. Observe, The crown of life is promised not only to *great and eminent saints*, but to all those that have the love of God reigning in their hearts. Every soul that truly loves God, shall have its trials in this world fully recompensed in that world above, *where love is made perfect*.

13. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. 14. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. 15. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death. 16. Do not err, my beloved brethren. 17. Every good gift, and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. 18. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.

We are here taught several things.

I. We are taught, that God is *not the author of any man's sin*. Whoever they are that raise persecutions against good men, and whatever injustice and sin they may be guilty of in *proceeding against them*, God is not to be charged with it. And whatever sins good men may themselves be provoked to by their exercises and afflictions, God is not the cause of them. It seems to be here supposed that some professors might fall, in the hour of temptation: That the rod *resting upon them*, might carry some into ill courses, and make them *put forth their hands unto iniquity*. But though this should be the case, and though such delinquents should attempt to lay their fault on God; yet the blame of their miscarriages must lie entirely upon themselves. For,

1. There is nothing in the nature of God, that they can lay the blame upon. *Let no man say when he is tempted*, to take any evil course, or do any evil thing, *I am tempted of God*; for *God cannot be tempted with evil*. All moral evil is owing to some disorder in the being that is chargeable with it; either to want of wisdom, or want of power, or want of decorum and purity in the will. But who can impeach the holy God with the want of these which are his very essence? No exigence of affairs can ever tempt him to dishonour or deny himself, and therefore he cannot be tempted with evil.

2. There is nothing in the *providential dispensations* of God, that the blame of any man's sin can be laid upon, ver. 13. *Neither tempteth he any man*. As God cannot be tempted with evil himself, so neither can he be a tempter of others. He cannot be a promoter of what is repugnant to his nature. The carnal mind is willing to charge its own sins on God. There is something hereditary in this:

Our first father Adam tells God that *the woman thou gavest me, tempted me*: Thereby, in effect, throwing the blame upon God, for giving him the tempter. Let no man speak thus. It is very bad to sin; but it is much worse, when we have done amiss, to charge it upon God, and say *it was long of him*. They that lay the blame of their sins either upon their constitution, or upon their condition in the world, or pretend they are under a fatal necessity of sinning, they wrong God, as if he was the author of sin. Afflictions, as sent by God, are designed to draw out our graces, but not our corruptions.

II. We are taught, *where the true cause of evil lies*, and where the blame ought to be laid, *ver. 14. Every man is tempted (in an ill sense) when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed*. In other scriptures the devil is called the tempter; and other things may sometimes concur to tempt us; but neither the devil, nor any other person or thing is to be blamed so as to excuse our selves: For the true original of evil and temptation is in our own hearts. The combustible matter is in us, though the flame may be blown up by some outward causes. And therefore, *if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it*, Prov. ix. 12.

Observe here, 1. The method of sin in its proceeding. First it draws away, then entices.

As holiness consists of two parts, forsaking that which is evil, and cleaving to that which is good; so these two things reversed, are the two parts of sin: The heart is carried from that which is good, and enticed to cleave to that which is evil. It is first by corrupt inclinations, or by lusting after, and coveting some sensual or worldly thing, estranged from the life of God; and then by degrees fixed in a course of sin.

2. We may observe from hence the power and policy of sin. The word here rendered drawn away, signifies a being forcibly haled or compelled. The word translated enticed, signifies being wheedled and beguiled by allurements and deceitful representations of things, *ἡλεκτόμενος καὶ ἀλεαζόμενος*. There is a great deal of force done to conscience, and to the mind by the power of corruption: And there is a great deal of cunning, and deceit, and flattery in sin to gain us to its interests. The force and power of sin could never prevail, were it not for its cunning and guile. Sinners that perish are wheedled and flattered into their own destruction. And this will justify God for ever in their damnation, that they destroyed themselves. Their sin lies at their own door, and therefore their blood will lie upon their own heads.

3. Observe the success of corruption in their heart, *ver. 15. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin*. That is, sin being allowed to excite desires in us, it will soon ripen those desires into consent; and then it is said to have conceived: The sin truly exists, though it be but in embryo. And when it is grown to its full size in the mind, it is then brought forth in actual execution. Stop the beginnings of sin therefore, or else all the evils it produces must be wholly charged upon us.

4. Observe the final issue of sin, and how it ends: *Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death*. After sin is brought forth in actual commissions, the *finishing of it* (as Dr. Manton observes) is its being strengthened by frequent acts, and settled into an habit. And when the iniquities of men are thus filled up, death is brought forth. There is a death upon the soul, and death comes upon the body: And besides death spiritual and temporal, the wages of sin is eternal death too. Let sin therefore be repented of, and forsaken before it be finished. *Why will ye die, O house of Israel!* Ezek. xxxiii. 11. God has no pleasure in your death, as he has no hand in your sin; but both sin and misery is owing to your selves. Your own hearts lusts, and corruptions are your tempters; and when by degrees they have carried you off from God, and finished the power and dominion of sin in you, then they will prove your destroyers.

III. We are taught yet farther, that whilst we are the authors and procurers of all sin and misery to our selves, *God is the Father and fountain of all good*, *ver. 16, 17*. We should take particular care not to err in our conceptions of God. *Do not err, my beloved brethren, μή πλανᾶσθε, do not wander*, that is, from the word of God, and the accounts of him you have there. Do not stray into erroneous opinions, and go off from the standard of truth; the things which you have received from the Lord Jesus, and by the directions of his Spirit. The loose opinions of Simon, and the Nicolaitans (from whom the Gnosticks, a most sensual corrupt sect of people arose afterwards) may, perhaps, by the apostle here, be more especially cautioned against. Those who are minded to look into these, may consult the first book of Irenæus against heresies, let corrupt men run into what notions they will, the truth, as it is in Jesus, stands thus; that God is not, cannot be the author and patronizer of any thing that is evil; but must be acknowledged as the cause and spring of every thing that is good, *ver. 17. Every good and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, &c.*

Here observe, 1. God is the *Father of lights*. The visible light of the sun and heavenly bodies is from him: He said, *let there be light, and there was light*. Thus God is at once represented as the Creator of the sun, and in some respects compared to it. "As the sun is the same in its nature and influences, though the earth and clouds, oft interposing, make it seem to us as varying; by its rising and setting and by its different appearances, or intire with-

"drawment; when the change is not in it: So God is unchangeable, and our changes and shadows are not from any mutability, or shadowy alterations in him, but from our selves." Mr. Baxter. The Father of lights, *with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*. What the sun is in nature, God is in grace, providence, and glory; ay, and infinitely more. For,

2. Observe, *every good gift is from him*. As the Father of lights he gives the light of reason: *The inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding*, Job xxxii. 8. He gives also the light of learning: Solomon's wisdom in the knowledge of nature, and in the arts of government, and in all his improvements, is ascribed to God. The light of divine revelation is more immediately from above. The light of faith, and purity, and all manner of consolation is from him. So that we have nothing good but what we receive from God; as there is no evil or sin in us, or done by us, but what is owing to our selves. We must own God as the author of all the powers and perfections that are in the creature, and the giver of all the benefits which we have in and by those powers and perfections: But none of their darkneses, their imperfections, or their ill actions are to be charged on the *Father of lights*; from him proceeds every good and perfect gift, both pertaining to this life, and that which is to come.

3. Observe, that as every good gift is from God, so particularly the renovation of our natures, our regeneration, and all the holy, happy consequences of it, must be ascribed to him, *ver. 18. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, &c.* Here let us take notice, 1. That a true Christian is a creature begotten anew. He becomes as different a person from what he was, before the renewing influences of divine grace, as if he were formed over again, and born afresh. 2. The original of this good work is here declared. It is of God's own will; not by our skill or power; not from any good foreseen in us, or done by us, but purely from the goodwill and grace of God. 3. The means whereby this is effected are pointed out: *The word of truth*, i. e. the gospel; as St. Paul expresses it more plainly, *1 Cor. iv. 15. I have begotten you in Jesus Christ through the gospel*. This gospel is indeed a *word of truth*; or else it could never produce such real, such lasting, such great and noble effects. We may rely upon it, and venture our immortal souls upon it: And we shall find it a means of our sanctification, as it is a *word of truth*, Joh. xvii. 17. 4. The end and design of God's giving renewing grace is here laid down; *That we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures*: That we should be God's portion and treasure, and a more peculiar property to him, as the first-fruits were. And that we should become holy to the Lord, as the first-fruits were consecrated to him. Christ is the first-fruits of Christians, Christians are the first-fruits of creatures.

19. Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. 20. For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. 21. Wherefore lay apart all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls. 22. But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. 23. For if any man be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: 24. For he beholdeth himself and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. 25. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. 26. If any man among you seem to be religious and brideth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. 27. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father, is this; To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

In this part of the chapter we are required,

I. To restrain the workings of passion. This lesson we should learn under afflictions; and this we shall learn if we are indeed begotten again by the word of truth. For thus the connexion stands: An angry and hasty spirit is soon provoked to ill things by afflictions; and errors, and ill opinions become prevalent, through the workings of our own vile and vain affections: But the renewing grace of God, and the word of the gospel teach us to subdue these; *Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, &c.* This may refer,

1. To the *word of truth* spoken of in the verse foregoing. And so we may observe, that it is our duty rather to *hear God's word*, and apply our minds to understand it, than to speak according to our own fancies, or the opinions of men, and to run into heat and passion thereupon. Let not such errors as that of God's being the occasion of men's sin, ever be hastily, much less angrily mentioned by you; (and so as to other errors;) but be ready to hear and consider what God's word teaches us in all such cases. 2. This may be applied to the afflictions and temptations spoken of in the beginning of the chapter. And then we may observe, that it is our duty rather to hear how God explains his providences, and what he designs by

by them ; than to say as David did in his haste, *I am cut off* ; or as Jonah did in his passion, *I do well to be angry*. Instead of censuring God under our trials, let us open our ears and hearts to hear what he will say to us. 3. This may be understood as referring to the disputes and differences that Christians, in those times of trial, were running into among themselves ; and so this part of the chapter may be considered without any connexion with what goes before : And here we may observe, that, whenever matters of difference arise among Christians, each side should be willing to hear the other. People are many times stiff in their own opinions, because they are not willing to hear what others have to offer against them : whereas we should be *swift to hear* reason and truth on all sides, and be *slow to speak* any thing that should prevent this : And when we do speak, there should be nothing of wrath ; for *a soft answer turneth away wrath* : And as this epistle is designed to correct a variety of disorders that were among Christians, these words, [*swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath*] may be very well interpreted according to this last explication : And we may further observe from them, that, if men would govern their tongues, they must govern their passions : When Moses's spirit was provoked, *he spake unadvisedly with his lips* : If we would be *slow to speak*, we must be *slow to wrath*.

II. A very good reason is given for suppressing of anger, *ver. 20*. *For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*. It is as if the apostle had said, whereas men often pretend zeal for God and his glory in their heat and passion, let them know that God needs not the passions of any man ; his cause is better served by mildness and meekness, than by wrath and fury. Solomon says, *The words of the wise are heard in quiet, more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools*, Eccles. ix. 17. Dr. Manton here says of some assemblies, " That if we were as *swift to hear*, as we are ready to *speak*, there would be less of *wrath*, and more of profit in our meetings. " I remember when a Manichee contested with Augustine, and with importunate clamour cried, *Hear me ! hear me !* the father modestly replied, *Nec ego te, nec tu me, sed ambo audiamus apostolum* : Neither let me hear thee, nor do thou hear me, but let us both hear the apostle." The worst thing we can bring to a religious controversy is anger : This, however it pretends to be raised by a concern for what is just and right, yet is not to be trusted : *Wrath* is a human thing, and *the wrath of man* stands opposed to *the righteousness of God* : Those who pretend to serve the cause of God hereby, shew that they are neither acquainted with God, nor his cause : This passion must especially be watched against when we are hearing the word of God : See 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2.

III. We are called upon to suppress other corrupt affections, as well as rash anger, *ver. 21*. *Lay aside all filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness, &c.* The word here translated *filthiness*, signifies those lusts which have the greatest turpitude and sensuality in them ; and the words rendered *superfluity of naughtiness*, may be understood of the overflowings of malice, or any other spiritual wickednesses : Hereby we are taught, as Christians, to watch against, and lay aside, not only those more gross and fleshly dispositions and affections which denominate a person filthy, but all the disorders of a corrupt and naughty heart, which would prejudice it against the word and ways of God.

Observe, 1. That sin is a defiling thing ; it is called *filthiness* itself. 2. That there is abundance of that which is evil in us to be watched against ; there is *superfluity of naughtiness*. 3. It is not enough to restrain evil affections, but *they must be cast from us, or laid apart*, Isa. xxx. 22. *Thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth ; thou shalt say, Get ye hence*. 4. This must extend not only to outward sins, and greater abominations, but to all sin, of thought and affection, as well as speech and practice ; *πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν* : *All filthiness*, every thing that is corrupt and sinful. 5. Observe, from the foregoing parts of this chapter, that the laying apart *all filthiness*, is what a time of temptation and affliction calls for, and is necessary to the avoiding of error, and rightly receiving and improving the word of truth : For,

IV. We are here fully, though briefly, instructed concerning hearing the word of God.

1. We are required to prepare ourselves for it, *ver. 21*. to get rid of every corrupt affection, and of every prejudice and prepossession, and to lay aside those sins which pervert the judgment, and blind the mind : *All that filthiness, and superfluity of naughtiness*, before explained, must, in an especial manner, be subdued, and cast off, by all such as attend on the word of the gospel.

2. We are directed how to hear it : *Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls*. 1. In hearing the word of God, we are to *receive* it ; assent to the truths of it, consent to the laws of it ; *receive* it as the stock does the graft ; so as that the fruit which is produced may be, not according to the nature of the sour stock, but according to the nature of that word of the gospel which is *engrafted* into our souls. 2. We must therefore yield ourselves to the word of God, with most submissive, humble, and tractable tempers : This is to *receive it with meekness*. Being willing to hear of our faults, and taking it not only patiently, but thankfully ; desiring also to be molded and formed by the doctrines and precepts of the gospel. 3. In all our hearing we should aim at the salvation of *our souls* : It is the design of the word of God to make us *wise to salvation* ; and they that propose any meaner or

lower ends to themselves in attending upon it, dishonour the gospel, and disappoint their souls. We should come to the word of God (both to read it and hear it) as those that know it is *the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth*, Rom. i. 16.

3. We are taught what is to be done after hearing, *ver. 22*. *But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves*. Observe here, 1. That hearing is in order to doing ; the most attentive and the most frequent hearing of *the word of God* will not avail us, unless we be also *doers of it* : If we were to hear a sermon every day of the week, and an angel from heaven were the preacher, yet, if we rested in bare hearing, it would never bring us to heaven : Therefore the apostle insists much upon it (and, without doubt, it is indispensably necessary) that we *practise what we hear*. " There must be inward practice by meditation, and outward practice in true obedience." Mr. Baxter. It is not enough to remember what we hear, and to be able to repeat it, and to give testimony to it, and commend it, and write it, and preserve what we have written, but that which all this is in order to, and which crowns the rest, is, that we *be doers of the word*. Observe, 2. That bare *hearers* are self-deceivers ; the original word, *παραλογίζεσθαι*, signifies mens arguing sophistically to themselves ; their reasoning is manifestly deceitful and false, when they would make one part of their work discharge them from the obligation they lie under to another ; or persuade themselves, that filling their heads with notions is sufficient, though their hearts be empty of good affections and resolutions, and their lives fruitless of good works : Self-deceit will be found the worst deceit at last.

4. The apostle shews what is the proper use of *the word of God*, and who they are that do not use it as they ought, and who they are that do make a right use of it, *ver. 23, 25*. Let us consider each of these distinctly. 1. The use we are to make of God's word may be learnt from its being compared to a glass, in which a man may *behold his natural face*. As a looking glass shews us the spots and defilements upon our faces, that they may be remedied, and washed off ; so *the word of God* shews us our sins, that we may repent of them, and get them pardoned ; and shews us what is amiss, that it may be amended. There are glasses that will flatter people, but that which is truly *the word of God* is no flattering glass : If you flatter yourselves, it is your own fault ; *the truth, as it is in Jesus*, flatters no man : Let *the word of truth* be carefully attended to, and it will set before you the corruption of your nature, the disorders of your hearts and lives ; it will tell you plainly what you are. St. Paul describes himself as insensible of the corruption of his nature till he saw himself in the glass of the law, *Rom. vii. 9*. *I was alive without the law*, i. e. I took all to be right with me, and thought myself not only clean, but, compared with the generality of the world, that I was beautiful too ; *but when the commandment came, when the glass of the law was set before me, then sin revived, and I died* ; then I saw my spots and deformities, and discovered that amiss in myself, which before I was not aware of ; and such was the power of the law, and of sin, that I then perceived myself in a state of death, and condemnation. Thus, when we attend to *the word of God*, so as to see ourselves, our true state and condition, to rectify what is amiss, and to form and dress ourselves anew by the glass of God's word, this is to make a proper use of it. 2. We have here an account of those who do not use this glass of the word as they ought, *ver. 24*. *He that beholdeth himself, and goes his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was*. This is the true description of one that hears *the word of God*, and does it not. How many are there that, when they sit under the word, are affected with their own sinfulness, and misery, and danger, acknowledge the evil of sin, acknowledge their need of Christ, but when their hearing is over, all is forgotten, convictions are lost, good affections are vanished, and pass away, like the waters of a land-flood ; he *straightway forgets*, &c. " The word of God (as Dr. Manton speaks) discovereth how we may do away our sins, and deck and attire our souls with the righteousness of Jesus Christ : *Maculae sunt peccata quae ostendit lex ; aqua est sanguis Christi quem ostendit evangelium* : Our sins are the spots which the law discovers ; Christ's blood is the laver which the gospel shews." But in vain do we hear God's word, and look into the gospel-glass, if we *go away, and forget* our spots, instead of washing them off, and forget our remedy, instead of applying to it : This is the case of those who do not hear the word as they ought. 3. Those also are described, and pronounced *blest*, that hear aright, and that use the glass of God's word as they should do, *ver. 25*. *Who's looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein*, &c. Observe here, that the gospel is a *law of liberty*, or, as Mr. Baxter expresses it, *of liberation*, giving us deliverance from the Jewish law, and from sin, and guilt, and wrath, and death : The ceremonial law was a *yoke of bondage*, the gospel of Christ is a *law of liberty*. Observe again, that it is a *perfect law* ; nothing can be added to it. Observe farther, that in hearing the word we *look into this perfect law* ; we consult it for counsel and direction ; we *look into* it, that from thence we may take our measures : But, observe withal, that then only do we *look into the law of liberty* as we should, when we *continue therein*. " When we dwell in the study of it, till it turn to a spiritual life, ingrafted and digested in us." Mr. Baxter. When we are not forgetful of it, but practise it as our work and business ; set it always before our eyes, and make it the constant rule

of our conversation and behaviour, and model the temper of our minds by it. Observe once more from this place, that they who thus do, and *continue in the law and word of God*, are, and *shall be, blessed in their deed; blessed in all their ways*, according to the first *psalm*, which, some think, St. James here alludes to: *He that meditates in the law of God, and walks according to it*, the psalmist says, *shall prosper in whatsoever he does*: And *he that is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work which God's word sets him about*, St. James says, *shall be blessed*. The Papists pretend, that here we have a clear text to prove we are blessed for our good deeds; but Dr. Manton, in answer to that pretence, puts the reader upon marking the distinctness of scripture phrase: The apostle does not say, for his *deeds that any man is blessed*, but *in his deed*. This is a way in which we shall certainly find blessedness, but not the cause of it. This blessedness does not lie in knowing, but in doing the will of God, *John xiii. 17. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*. It is not talking, but walking, that will bring us to heaven.

V. The apostle next informs us how we may distinguish betwixt a *vain religion*, and that which is *pure*, and approved of God. Great and hot disputes there are in the world about this matter: What *religion* is false and *vain*, and what is true and *pure*. I wish men would agree to let the holy scripture in this place determine the question: And here it is plainly and peremptorily declared,

1. What is a *vain religion*, ver. 26. *If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridlETH not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain*. Here are three things to be observed: 1. In a *vain religion* there is much of shew, and affecting to *seem religious* in the eyes of others: This, I think, is mentioned in a manner that should fix our thoughts on the word, *seemeth*: When men are more concerned to *seem religious*, than really to be so, it is a sign their *religion* is but *vain*: Not that *religion* itself is a *vain* thing, they do it a great deal of wrong that say, *It is in vain to serve the Lord*; but it is possible people may make it a *vain* thing, if they have only a *form of godliness*, and not *the power*. 2. In a *vain religion*, there is much censuring, reviling, and detracting of others: The *not bridling the tongue* here, is chiefly meant of not abstaining from these evils of *the tongue*. When we hear people ready to speak of the faults of others, or to censure them as holding scandalous errors, or to lessen the wisdom and piety of those about them, that themselves may seem the wiser and better, this is a sign that they have but a *vain religion*: That man who has a detracting *tongue*, cannot have a truly humble, gracious heart: He that delights to injure his neighbour, in vain pretends to love God; therefore a reviling *tongue* will prove a man a hypocrite: Censuring is a pleasing sin, extremely compliant with nature; and therefore evidences a man's being in a natural state. These sins of *the tongue* were the great sins of that age in which St. James writ (as other parts of this epistle fully shew) and it is an ill sign of a *vain religion* (says Dr. Manton) to be carried away with the evil of the times. This has ever been a leading sin with hypocrites, that the more ambitious they have been to *seem* well themselves, the more free they are in censuring and running down others; and there is such quick intercourse betwixt *the tongue* and the heart, that the one may be known by the other: On these accounts it is that the apostle has made an ungoverned *tongue* an undoubted, certain proof of a *vain religion*: There is no strength nor power in that *religion* which will not enable a man to *bridle his tongue*. 3. In a *vain religion* a man *deceiveth his own heart*; he goes on in such a course of detracting from others, and making himself *seem* some body, that at last the vanity of his *religion* is consummated by *the deceiving of his own soul*. When once *religion* comes to be a *vain* thing, how great is the vanity!

2. It is here plainly and peremptorily declared wherein *true religion* consists, ver. 27. *Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this*. Observe, 1. It is the glory of religion to be *pure* and *undefiled*; not mixed with the inventions of men, nor the corruptions of the world. False religions may be known by their impurity and uncharitableness; according to that of St. John, he that *doth not righteousness* is not of God, neither he that *loveth not his brother*, 1 John iii. 10. But, on the other hand, an *holy life*, and a *charitable heart* shew a true religion. Our religion is not (says Dr. Manton) adorned with ceremonies, but purity and charity. And it is a good observation of his, that a religion which is pure should be kept undefiled. Observe, 2. That religion is pure and undefiled, which is so before God and the Father. That is right which is so in God's eye, and which chiefly aims at his approbation. True religion teaches us to do every thing as in the presence of God; and to seek his favour, and study to please him in all our actions. Observe, 3. That compassion and charity to the poor and distressed, is a very great and necessary part of true religion; *visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction*. Visiting is here put for all manner of relief which we are capable of giving to others: And *fatherless* and *widows* are here particularly mentioned because they are generally most apt to be neglected or oppressed; but by them is meant all others that are objects of charity; all that are in affliction. It is very remarkable that if the sum of religion be drawn up in two articles, this is one, to be *charitable* and *relieve the afflicted*. Observe, 4. That an *unspotted life* must accompany an unfeigned love and charity; *to keep himself unspotted from the world*. The world is apt to

spot and blemish the soul, and it is hard to live in it, and have to do with it, and not be defiled; but this must be our constant endeavour. Herein consists *pure* and *undefiled religion*. The very things of the world too much taint our spirits if we are much conversant with them; but the sins and lusts of the world deface and defile them very wofully indeed. St. John comprizes *all that is in the world*, which we are not to love, under three heads; *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*; and to *keep ones self unspotted from all these*, is to *keep ourselves unspotted from the world*. May God, by his grace, keep both our hearts and lives clean from *the love of the world*, and from the temptations of wicked, worldly men.

CHAP. II.

In this chapter the apostle condemns a sinfulness regarding the rich, and despising the poor; which he imputes to partiality and injustice, and shews it to be an acting contrary to God, who has chosen the poor, and whose interest is often persecuted, and his name blasphemed by the rich, ver. 1,—7. He shews that the whole law is to be fulfilled, and that mercy should be followed, as well as justice, ver. 8,—13. He exposes the error and folly of those that boast of faith without works, telling us that this is but a dead faith, and such a faith as devils have, not the faith of Abraham, or of Rahab, ver. 14. to the end.

1. MY brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 2. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3. And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: 4. Are ye not then partial in your selves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? 5. Harken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him? 6. But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats? 7. Do not they blaspheme that worthy name, by the which ye are called?

The apostle is here reproofing a very corrupt practice; he shews how much mischief there is in the sin of *προσωποληψία*, respect of persons, which seemed to be a very growing evil in the churches of Christ, even in those early ages; and which, in these after times, has sadly corrupted and divided Christian nations and societies: And here we have,

I. A caution against this sin laid down in general, ver. 1. *My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons*. Observe here, 1. The character of Christians fully implied; they are such as *have the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ*; they embrace it, they receive it, they govern themselves by it; they entertain the doctrine, and submit to the law and government of Christ; they have it as a trust, they have it as a treasure. Observe, 2. How honourably St. James speaks of Jesus Christ, he calls him *the Lord of glory*; for he is *the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person*. Observe, 3. That Christ's being *the Lord of glory*, should teach us not to respect Christians for any thing so much as their relation and conformity to Christ. You that profess to believe the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, which the poorest Christian shall partake of equally with the rich, and to which all worldly glory is but vanity, you should not make mens outward and worldly advantages the measure of your respect: In professing *the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ*, we should not shew respect to men, so as to cloud or lessen the glory of our glorious Lord: However any may think of it, this is certainly a very heinous sin.

II. We have this sin described, and cautioned against, by an instance or example of it, ver. 2, 3. *For if there come into your assembly a man with a gold ring, &c. Assembly* here is meant of those meetings which were appointed for deciding matters of difference among the members of the church; or, for determining when censures should be passed upon any, and what those censures should be; therefore the Greek word here used, *συνάγωγη*, signifies such an assembly as that in the Jewish synagogues, when they met to do justice. Maimonides says (as I find the passage quoted by Dr. Manton) "That it was expressly provided by the Jews constitutions, that when a poor man and a rich plead together, the rich shall not be bidden to sit down, and the poor stand, or sit in a worse place, but both sit, or both stand alike." To this the phrases used by the apostle have a most plain reference, and therefore the assembly here spoken of, must be some such as the synagogue assemblies of the Jews were, when they met to hear causes, and to execute justice: To these the arbitrations and censures of their Christian assemblies are compared: But we must be careful not to apply what is here said to the common assemblies for worship; for in these certainly there may be appointed different places for persons, according to their rank and circumstances, without sin: They do not understand

derstand the apostle, who fix his severity here upon this practice ; they do not mind the word *judges* used in *ver. 4.* nor what is said of their being convicted as *transgressors by the law*, if they had such a *respect of persons* as is here spoken of, according to *ver. 9.* Thus, now put the case, *there comes into your assembly* (when of the same nature with some of those at the synagogue) *a man* that is distinguished by his dress, and that makes a figure, *and there comes in also a poor man in vile raiment*, and ye carry it partially, and determine wrong, or ill things, merely because the one makes a better appearance, or is in better circumstances than the other. Observe from hence, 1. That God has his remnant among all sorts of people ; among those *that wear soft and gay clothing*, and among those *that wear poor and vile raiment* : But observe, 2. That, in matters of religion, rich and poor stand upon a level ; no man's riches set him in the least nearer to God, nor does any man's poverty set him at a distance from God : *With the most High there is no respect of persons*, and therefore in matters of conscience there should be none with us. Observe, 3. That all undue honouring of worldly greatness and riches should especially be watched against in Christian societies : St. James does not here encourage rudeness, or disorder ; civil respect must be paid, and some difference may be allowed in our carriage towards persons of different ranks, but this respect must never be such as to influence the proceedings of Christian societies in disposing of the offices of the church, or in passing the censures of the church, or in any thing that is purely a matter of religion ; here we are to *know no man after the flesh* : It is the character of a citizen of Zion, *that in his eyes a vile person is contemned, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord* : If a poor man be a good man, we must not value him a whit the less for his poverty ; and if a rich man be an ill man (though he may have both gay clothing, and a gay profession) we must not value him any whit the more for his riches. Observe, 4. Of what importance it is to take care what rule we go by in judging of men ; if we allow ourselves commonly to judge by outward appearance, this will too much influence our spirits and our conduct in religious assemblies ; there is many a man, whose wickedness renders him vile and despicable, that yet makes a figure in the world ; and, on the other hand, there is many an humble, heavenly, good Christian, that is clothed meanly ; but neither should he, nor his Christianity, be thought the worse of on this account.

III. We have the greatness of this sin set forth, *ver. 4, 5.* It is great partiality, it is injustice, and it is to set ourselves against God, who has *chosen the poor*, and will honour and advance them (if good) let who will despise them.

1. In this sin there is shameful partiality : *Are ye not then partial in yourselves ?* The question is here put, as what could not fail of being answered by every man's conscience, that would put it seriously to himself. According to the strict rendering of the original, the question is, *Have ye not made a difference ?* And, in that difference, do you not judge by a false rule, and go upon false measures ? And does not the charge of a partiality, condemned by the law, lie fully against you ? Does not your own conscience tell you that you are guilty ? Appeals to conscience are of great advantage, when we have to do with such as make a profession, even though they may be fallen into a very corrupt state.

2. This *respect of persons* is owing to the evil and injustice of *the thoughts* : As the temper, carriage, and proceedings are partial, so the heart and thoughts, from whence all flows, are evil : *Ye are become judges of evil thoughts*, i. e. *ye are judges*, according to those unjust estimations, and corrupt opinions, which you have formed to yourselves : Trace your partiality, till you come to those hidden thoughts which accompany and support it, and you will find those to be *exceeding evil* : You secretly prefer outward pomp before inward grace, and *the things that are seen* before those *which are not seen* : The deformity of sin is never truly and fully discerned, till the *evil of our thoughts* be disclosed : And it is this which highly aggravates the faults of our tempers and lives, that *the imagination of the thoughts of the heart is evil*, Gen. vi. 5.

3. This *respect of persons* is a heinous sin, because it is to shew ourselves most directly contrary to God, *ver. 5.* *Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, &c.* But ye have despised them, *ver. 6.* God has made them *heirs of a kingdom*, that you make of *no reputation* ; and has given them very great and glorious promises, to whom you can hardly give a good word, or a respectful look : And is not this a monstrous iniquity in you that pretend to be the children of God, and conformed to him ? *Hearken, my beloved brethren*, by all the love I have for you, and all the regards you have to me, I beg you would consider these things : Take notice of it, that many of *the poor of this world are the chosen of God* : Their being *God's chosen* doth not prevent their being *poor* ; their being *poor* doth not at all prejudice the evidences of their being *chosen*, Matt. xi. 5. *The poor are evangelized.* God designed to recommend his holy religion to mens esteem and affection, not by the external advantages of gaiety and pomp, but by its intrinsic worth and excellency ; and therefore *chose the poor of this world*. Again take notice, that many *poor in the world*, yet are *rich in faith* ; thus the poorest may become rich ; and this is what they ought to be especially ambitious of ; it is expected from those who have wealth and estates, that they be *rich in good works* ; because the more they have, the more they have to do good with ; but it is

expected from *the poor in the world*, that they be *rich in faith* ; for the less they have here, the more they may, and should, live in the believing expectation of better things in a better world. Take notice farther, that believing Christians are *rich in title*, and in being *heirs of a kingdom*, though they may be very poor as to present possessions ; what is laid out upon them is but little, what is laid up for them is unspeakably rich and great. Note again, that where any are *rich in faith*, there will be also divine love ; *faith working by love*, will be in all the heirs of glory. Note once more under this head, that heaven is a *kingdom*, and a *kingdom promised to them that love God*. We read of *the crown promised to them that love God*, in the former chapter, *ver. 12.* we here find there is a *kingdom* too : And as *the crown is a crown of life*, so *the kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom*.

All these things laid together, shew how highly *the poor in this world*, if *rich in faith*, are now honoured, and shall hereafter be advanced by God ; and, consequently, how very ill a thing it was for them to *despise the poor* : After such considerations as these, the charge is cutting indeed ; *But ye have despised the poor*, *ver. 6.*

4. *Respecting persons*, in the sense of this place, on account of their riches, or outward figure, is shewn to be a very great sin, because of the mischiefs which are owing to worldly wealth and greatness, and the folly which there is in Christians paying undue regards to those who had so little regard either to their God, or them. *Do not rich men oppress you, and draw you before the judgment seats ? Do not they blaspheme that worthy name, by the which ye are called ?* *ver. 7.* Consider how commonly riches are the incentives of vice and mischief, of blasphemy and persecution : Consider how many calamities you yourselves sustain, and how great reproaches are thrown upon your religion, and your God, by men of wealth and power, and worldly greatness ; and this will make your sin appear *exceeding sinful*, and foolish, in setting up that which tends to pull you down, and to destroy all that you are building up, and to dishonour *that worthy name, by which you are called* : The name of Christ is a *worthy name*, and reflects an honour, and gives worth to them that wear it.

8. If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well. 9. But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. 10. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. 11. For he that said, Do not commit adultery ; said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. 12. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. 13. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy ; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.

The apostle having condemned the sin of those who had an undue *respect of persons*, and having urged what was sufficient to convict them of the greatness of this evil, he now proceeds to shew how the matter may be mended ; it is the work of a gospel ministry, not only to reprove and warn, but to teach and direct, *Col. i. 28. Warning every man, and teaching every man.* And here,

1. We have the law that is to guide us in all our regards to men, set down in general, *ver. 8.* *If ye fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well.* Lest any should think St. James had been pleading for the poor so as to throw contempt on the rich, he now lets them know, that he did not design to encourage an ill carriage toward any ; they must not hate, or be rude to the rich, no more than *despise the poor* ; but, as *the scripture* teacheth us, to *love all our neighbours*, be they rich or poor, as ourselves, so, in our having a steady regard to this rule, *we shall do well.* Observe from hence, 1. That the rule for Christians to walk by, is settled in *the scriptures* ; *if, according to the scriptures, &c.* It is not great men, nor worldly wealth, nor corrupt practices among professors themselves, that must guide us, but *the scriptures of truth.* Observe, 2. *The scripture* gives us this as a *law*, to *love our neighbour as ourselves* ; it is what still remains in full force, and is rather carried higher and farther by Christ, than made less important to us. Observe, 3. This law is a *royal law*, it comes from the King of kings ; its own worth and dignity deserves it should be thus honoured ; and the state in which all Christians now are, as it is a state of liberty, and not of bondage, or oppression, makes this law, by which they are to regulate all their actions to one another, a *royal law.* Observe, 4. That a pretence of observing this *royal law*, when it is interpreted with partiality, will not excuse men in any unjust proceedings : It is implied here, that some were ready to flatter rich men, and be partial to them, because, if they were in the like circumstances, they should expect such regards to themselves ; or, they might plead, that, to shew a distinguished respect to those whom God, in his providence, had distinguished by their rank and degree in the world, this was but doing right ; therefore the apostle allows, that, so far as they were concerned to observe the duties of the second table, they *did well in giving honour to whom honour was due, &c.* but this fair pretence would not cover their

sin, in that undue respect of persons which they stood chargeable with ; for,

2. This general law is to be considered together with a particular law, *ver. 9. If ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.* Notwithstanding the law of laws, *To love your neighbour as yourselves,* and to shew that respect to them you would be apt to look for yourselves if in their circumstances, yet this will not excuse your distributing, either the favours or censures of the church, according to mens outward condition ; but here you must look to a particular law, which God, who gave the other, has given you together with it, and by this you will stand fully convicted of the sin I have charged you with ; this law is in *Levit. xix. 15. Thou shalt do no unrighteousness in judgment ; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor the person of the mighty ; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.* Yea, the very royal law itself, rightly explained, would serve to convict them, because it teaches them to put themselves as much in the places of the poor, as in those of the rich, and so to carry it equitably toward one as well as the other : Hence he proceeds,

3. To shew the extent of the law, and how far obedience must be paid to it ; they must fulfil the royal law, have a regard to one part as well as another, otherwise it would not stand them in stead, when they pretended to urge it as a reason for any particular actions, *ver. 10. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all.* This may be considered, 1. With reference to the case St. James has been upon : Do you plead for your respect to the rich, because you are to love your neighbour as yourselves ? Why then shew also an equitable and due regard to the poor, because you are to love your neighbour as yourself : Or else your offending in one point, will spoil your pretence of observing that law at all : *Whosoever shall keep the whole law, if he offend in one point, wilfully, allowedly, and with continuance, and so as to think he shall be excused in some matters, because of his obedience in others, he is guilty of all ;* that is, he incurs the same penalty, and is liable to the same punishment, by the sentence of the law, as if he had broken it in other points, as well as that he stands chargeable with ; not that all sins are equal, but that all carry the same contempt of the authority of the lawgiver, and so bind over to such punishment as is threatened on the breach of that law. This shews us what a vanity it is to think that our good deeds will atone for our bad deeds, and plainly puts us upon looking for some other atonement. 2. This is farther illustrated by putting a case different from that before mentioned, *ver. 11. For he that said, Do not commit adultery ; said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.* One, perhaps, is very severe in the case of adultery, or what tends to such pollutions of the flesh ; but less ready to condemn murder, or what tends to ruin the health, break the hearts, and destroy the lives of others : Another has a prodigious dread of murder, but has more easy thoughts of adultery ; whereas one that looks at the authority of the lawgiver, more than the matter of the command, will see the same reason for condemning the one, as the other : Obedience is then acceptable, when all is done with an eye to the will of God ; and disobedience is to be condemned, in whatever instance it be, as it is a contempt of the authority of God ; and, for that reason, if we offend in one point, we condemn the authority of him that gave the whole law, and so far are guilty of all. Thus, if you look to the law of old, you stand condemned ; for, *curled is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them,* Gal. iii. 10.

4. St. James directs Christians to govern and conduct themselves more especially by the law of Christ, *ver. 12. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.* This will teach us, not only to be just and impartial, but very compassionate and merciful to the poor ; and it will set us perfectly free from all sordid and undue regards to the rich. Observe here, 1. The gospel is called a law ; it has all the requisites of a law ; precepts, with rewards and punishments annexed ; it prescribes duty, as well as administers comfort ; and Christ is a king to rule us, as well as a prophet to teach us, and a priest to sacrifice and intercede for us : *We are under the law to Christ.* 2. It is a law of liberty ; a law that we have no reason to complain of, as a yoke, or burden ; for the service of God, according to the gospel, is perfect freedom ; it sets us at liberty from all slavish regards, either to the persons, or things of this world. 3. We must all be judged by this law of liberty ; mens eternal condition will be determined according to the gospel ; this is the book that will be opened, when we shall stand before the judgment seat ; there will be no relief to those whom the gospel condemns, nor will any accusation lie against those whom the gospel justifies. 4. It concerns us therefore so to speak, and act now, as becomes those that must shortly be judged by this law of liberty ; that is, that we come up to gospel terms, that we make conscience of gospel duties, that we be of a gospel temper, and that our conversation be a gospel conversation, because by this rule we must be judged. 5. The consideration of our being judged by the gospel, should engage us more especially to be merciful in our regards to the poor, *ver. 13. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy ; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.* Take notice here, that the doom which will be passed upon impenitent sinners at last, will be judgment without mercy ; there will be no mixtures, or allays, in

the cup of wrath, and of trembling, the dregs of which they must drink. Take notice again, that such as shew no mercy now, shall find no mercy in the great day : But we may note, on the other hand, that there will be such as shall become instances of the triumph of mercy, in whom mercy rejoices against judgment : All the children of men, in the last day, will be either vessels of wrath, or vessels of mercy. It concerns all to consider amongst which they shall be found ; and let us remember, that *blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

14. What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works ? can faith save him ? 15. If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food ; 16. And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be you warmed, and filled : notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body ; what doth it profit ? 17. Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. 18. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works : shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. 19. Thou believest that there is one God ; thou dost well : the devils also believe, and tremble. 20. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead ? 21. Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar ? 22. Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect ? 23. And the scripture was fulfilled, which faith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness : and he was called the friend of God. 24. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. 25. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way ? 26. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

In this latter part of the chapter the apostle shews the error of those who rested in a bare profession of the Christian faith, as if that would save them, while the temper of their minds, and the tenor of their lives, were altogether disagreeable to that holy religion they professed. To let them see, therefore, what a wretched foundation they built their hopes upon, it is here proved at large, that a man is justified, not by faith only, but by works. Now upon this arises a very great question, namely, how to reconcile St. Paul, and St. James ? St. Paul, in his epistles to the Romans and Galatians, seems to assert the direct contrary thing to what St. James here lays down, saying it often, and with a great deal of emphasis, that we are justified by faith only, and not by the works of the law. Amicæ scripturarum lites, utinam & nostræ ! There is a very happy agreement betwixt one part of scripture and another, notwithstanding seeming differences ; it were well if the differences among Christians were as easily reconciled. Nothing (says Mr. Baxter) but mens misunderstanding the plain drift and sense of Paul's epistles, could make so many take it for a matter of great difficulty to reconcile Paul and James : A general view of those things which are insisted on by the Antinomians, may be seen in Mr. Baxter's paraphrase : And many ways might be mentioned, which have been invented amongst learned men, to make the two apostles agree ; but it may be sufficient only to observe these few things following :

1. When St. Paul says, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law, Rom. iii. 28. he plainly speaks of other sort of works than St. James does, but not of another sort of faith : St. Paul speaks of works wrought in obedience to the law of Moses, and before mens embracing the faith of the gospel ; and he had to do with those who valued themselves so highly upon those works, that they rejected the gospel ; as Rom. x. the beginning most expressly declares ; but St. James speaks of works done in obedience to the gospel, and as the proper and necessary effects and fruits of a sound believing in Christ Jesus : Both are concerned to magnify the faith of the gospel, as that which alone could save us, and justify us ; but St. Paul magnifies it, by shewing the insufficiency of any works of the law before faith, or in opposition to the doctrine of justification by Jesus Christ : St. James magnifies the same faith, by shewing what are the genuine and necessary products and operations of it.

2. St. Paul doth not only speak of different works from those insisted on by St. James, but he speaks of a quite different use that was made of good works, from what is here urged and intended : St. Paul had to do with those who depended on the merit of their works in the sight of God, and thus he might well make them of no manner of account : St. James had to do with those that cried up faith, but would not allow works to be used even as evidences ; they depended upon a bare profession, as sufficient to justify them ; and with these he might well urge the necessity and vast importance of good works : As we must not break one table of the law, by dashing it against the other ; so neither must we break in pieces the law and the gospel, by making them clash with one another : Those that

that cry up the gospel, so as to set aside the law, and those that cry up the law, so as to set aside the gospel, are both in the wrong; for we must take our work before us, there must be both *faith* in Jesus Christ, and *good works* the fruit of *faith*.

3. The justification of which St. Paul speaks, is different from that spoken of by St. James; the one speaks of our persons being justified before God, the other speaks of our *faith* being justified before men: *Shew me thy faith by thy works* (says St. James) let thy *faith* be justified in the eyes of them that behold thee *by thy works*; but St. Paul speaks of justification in the sight of God, who justifies them only *that believe in Jesus*, and purely on account of *the redemption that is in him*: And thus we see that our persons are justified before God by *faith*, but our *faith* is justified before men by *works*: And this is so plainly the scope and design of the apostle James, that he is but confirming what St. Paul, in other places, says of his *faith*; that it is a *laborious faith*, and a *faith working by love*, Gal. v. 6. 1 Theff. i. 3. Titus iii. 8. and many other places.

4. St. Paul may be understood as speaking of that justification which is inchoate, St. James of that which is compleat; it is by *faith* only that we are put into a justified state, but then *good works* come in for the compleating of our justification at the last great day; then, *Come, ye children of my Father; — for I was hungry, and ye gave me meat, &c.*

Thus having cleared this part of scripture from every thing of a contradiction to other parts of it, let us see what is more particularly to be learnt from this excellent passage of James; we are taught,

I. That *faith* without works will not profit, and cannot save us, ver. 14. *What doth it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?* Observe here, 1. That *faith* which does not *save*, will not really *profit* us; a bare profession may sometimes seem to be profitable, to gain the good opinion of those who are truly good; and it may procure, in some cases, worldly good things; but *what profit will this be*, for any to *gain the world, and to lose their souls? What doth it profit? — can faith save him?* All things should be accounted profitable, or unprofitable to us, as they tend to forward or hinder the salvation of our souls: And, above all other things, we should take care thus to make account of *faith*, as that which does not *profit*, if it do not *save*, but will aggravate our condemnation and destruction at last. Observe, 2. That for a man to *have faith*, and to *say he has faith*, are two different things; the apostle does not say, *if a man have faith without works*, for that is not a supposable case, the drift of this place of scripture is plainly to shew, that an opinion, or speculation, or assent, *without works*, is not *faith*; but the case is put thus, *If a man say he hath faith, &c.* Men may boast of that to others, and be conceited of that in themselves, which yet they are really destitute of.

II. We are taught, that, as love and charity is an operative principle, so is *faith*; or that neither of them are good for any thing; and, by trying how it looks for a person to pretend he is very charitable who yet never does any works of charity, you may judge what sense there is in pretending to have *faith* without the proper and necessary fruits of it, ver. 15, 16, 17. *If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be you warmed, and filled: notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?* What will such a charity as this, that consists in bare words, avail either you, or the poor? Will you come before God with such empty shews of charity as these? Why, you might as well pretend that your love and charity will stand the test without acts of mercy, as think that a profession of *faith* will bear you out before God without works of piety and obedience, ver. 17. *Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.* We are too apt to rest in a bare profession of *faith*, and to think that this will *save* us; it is a cheap and easy religion to say, *we believe the articles of the Christian faith*; but it is a great delusion to imagine that this is enough to bring us to heaven; those that argue thus, wrong God, and put a cheat upon their own souls; a mock-faith is as hateful as a mock-charity, and both shew a heart dead to all real godliness; you may as soon take pleasure in a *dead* body, void of soul, or sense, or action, as God take pleasure in a *dead faith*, where there is no *works*.

III. We are taught to compare a *faith* boasting of it self without works, and a *faith* evidenced by works, by looking on both together, to try how that will work upon our minds, ver. 18. *Yea, a man may say, thou hast faith, and I have works: Shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.* Suppose a true believer thus pleading with a boasting hypocrite, "Thou makest a profession and sayest thou hast faith, I make no such boasts, but leave my works to speak for me. Now give any evidence of having the *faith* thou professest without works if thou canst, and I will soon let thee see how my works flow from, and are the undoubted evidences of *faith*." This is the evidence by which the scriptures all along teach men to judge both of themselves and others. And this is the evidence according to which Christ will proceed at the day of judgment, Rev. xx. 12. *The dead were judged according to their works.* How will they be exposed then who boast of that which they cannot evidence, or who go about to evidence their *faith* by any thing but works of piety and mercy!

IV. We are taught to look upon a *faith* of bare speculation and knowledge as the *faith* of devils, ver. 19. *Thou believest that there is one God, thou doest well; the devils also believe and tremble.* That instance of *faith* which the apostle here chuses to mention, is the first principle of all religion. Thou believest there is a God, against the atheists; and that there is but one God, against the idolaters; *thou doest well*, so far all is right. But to rest here, and take up a good opinion of thy self, or of thy state towards God merely on account of thy believing in him, this will render thee miserable, *The devils also believe and tremble.* If thou contentest thy self with a bare assent to articles of *faith*, and some speculations upon them, thus far the devils go. And as their *faith* and knowledge only serves to excite horror, so in a little time will thine. The word *tremble* is commonly looked upon as denoting a good effect of *faith*; but here it may rather be taken as a bad effect, when applied to the *faith* of devils. They tremble not out of reverence, but hatred and opposition to that one God on whom they believe. To rehearse that article of our creed, therefore, *I believe in God the Father almighty*, will not distinguish us from devils at last, unless we now give up our selves to God as the gospel directs; and love him, and delight our selves in him, and serve him, which the devils do not, cannot do.

V. We are taught that he who boasts of *faith* without works, is to be looked upon at present as a *foolish condemned person*, ver. 20. *But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?* The words translated *vain man*, *ἀνθρώπου κενή*, are observed to have the same signification with the word *Raca*; which must never be used to private persons, or as an effect of anger, Mat. v. 22. but may be used as here, to denote a just detestation of such a sort of men as are empty of good works, and yet boasters of their *faith*. And it plainly declares them fools and abjects in the sight of God. *Faith* without works is said to be dead, not only as void of all those operations which are the proofs of spiritual life; but as unavailable to eternal life. Such believers as rest in a bare profession of *faith*, are *dead while they live*.

VI. We are taught that a justifying *faith*, cannot be without works from two examples, Abraham and Rahab.

The first instance is that of Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the prime example of justification; to whom the Jews had a special regard, ver. 21. *Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?* St. Paul, on the other hand, says, in Chap. iv. of the epistle to the Romans that Abraham *believed, and it was counted to him for righteousness*. But these are well reconciled by observing what is said in Heb. xi. which shews that the *faith* both of Abraham and Rahab, was such as to produce those good works of which St. James speaks; and which are not to be separated from *faith* as justifying and saving. By what Abraham did, it appeared that he truly believed. Upon this foot the words of God himself plainly put this matter, Gen. xxii. 16. *Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; therefore in blessing I will bless thee.* Thus the *faith* of Abraham was a working *faith*; ver. 22. *It wrought with his works, and by works was made perfect.* And by this means you come to the true sense of that scripture which *faith*, ver. 23. Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. And thus he became the friend of God. *Faith* producing such works endeared him to the divine being, and advanced him to very peculiar favours and intimacies with God. It is a great honour done to Abraham, that he is called and counted the friend of God. You see there, ver. 24. how that *by works a man is justified*, [comes into such a state of favour and friendship with God] and not *by faith only*; not by a bare opinion or profession, or believing without obeying, but by having such a *faith* as is productive of good works.

Now besides the explication of this passage and example, as thus illustrating and supporting the argument St. James is upon, many other useful lessons may be learned by us, from what is here said concerning Abraham. (1.) Those that would have Abraham's blessings must be careful to copy after his *faith*: To boast of being Abraham's seed will not avail any, if they do not believe as he did. (2.) Those works which evidence true *faith* must be works of self-denial, and such as God himself commands, (as Abraham's offering up his son, his only son was) and not such works as are pleasing to flesh and blood, and may serve our interest, or are the meer fruits of our own imagination and devising. 3. What we piously purpose, and sincerely resolve to do for God, is accepted as if actually performed. Thus Abraham is regarded as offering up his son, though he did not actually proceed to make a sacrifice of him. It was a done thing in the mind, and spirit, and resolution of Abraham, and God accepts it as if fully performed and accomplished. 4. The acts of *faith* make it grow perfect, as the truth of *faith* makes it act. 5. Such an acting *faith* will make others as well as Abraham, friends of God. Thus Christ *faith* to his disciples, John xv. 15. *I have called you friends.* All transactions betwixt God and the truly believing soul are easy, pleasant and delightful. There is one will and one heart, and there is a mutual complacency. *God rejoiceth over them that truly believe, to do them good; and they delight themselves in him.*

The second example of *faith's* justifying it self and us, with and by works, is Rahab, ver. 25. *Likewise also, was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?* The former instance was of one renowned

renowned for his faith all his life long. This is of one noted for sin whose faith was meaner and of a much lower degree, so that the strongest faith will not do, nor the meanest be allowed to go, without works. Some say, that the word here rendred harlot, was the proper name of Rahab. Others tell us, that it signifies no more than an hostess, or one that keeps a publick house with whom therefore the spies lodged. But it is very probable her character was infamous; and such an instance is mentioned to shew that faith will save the worst, when evidenced by proper works; and it will not save the best without such works as God requires. This Rahab believed the report she had heard of God's powerful presence with Israel; but that which proved her faith sincere was, that to the hazard of her life she *received the messengers, and sent them out another way*. Observe here, 1. The wonderful power of faith in *transforming and changing sinners*. 2. The rewards which an operative faith meets with from God, to obtain his mercy and favour. 3. Observe that where great sins are pardoned, there must be great acts of self-denial. Rahab must prefer the honour of God and the good of his people before the preservation of her own country. Her former acquaintance must be discarded, and her former course of life entirely abandoned; and she must give signal proof and evidence of this, before she can be in a justified state. 4. After she is justified, yet her former character must be remembred. Not so much to her dishonour, as to glorify the rich grace and mercy of God. Though justified, she is called Rahab the harlot.

And now upon the whole matter the apostle draws this conclusion, *ver. 26. As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*. These words are read differently; some reading them, as the body without the breath is dead, so is faith without works. And then they shew that works are the companions of faith, as breathing is of life. Others read them, as the body without the soul is dead, so faith without works is dead also: and then they shew, that as the body has no action, nor beauty, but becomes a loathsome carcase when the soul is gone; so a bare profession without works is useless, yea, loathsome and offensive.

Let us then take heed of running into extreams in this case. For, 1. The *best works without faith*, are dead. They want their root and principle. It is by faith that any thing we do is really good; as done with an eye to God, and in obedience to him, and so as to aim principally at his acceptance. 2. The *most plausible profession of faith, without works*, is dead. As the root is dead when it produceth nothing green, nothing of fruit. Faith is the root, good works are the fruits, and we must see to it that we have both: We must not think that either, without the other, will justify and save us. This is the grace of God wherein we stand, and we should stand to it.

C H A P. III.

The apostle here reproves ambition, and an arrogant magisterial tongue; shews the duty and advantage of bridling it, because of its power to do mischief. Those who profess religion, ought especially to govern their tongues, ver. 1,—12. True wisdom makes men meek, and avoiders of strife and envy: And hereby may easily be distinguished from a wisdom that is earthly and hypocritical, ver. 13. ult.

1. **M**Y brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. 2. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, *and able also to bridle the whole body*. 3. Behold, we put bits in the horses mouths, that they may obey us; and we turn about their whole body. 4. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. 5. Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! 6. And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue amongst our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. 7. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: 8. But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. 9. Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. 10. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. 11. Doth a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? 12. Can the fig-tree, my brethren, bear olive-berries? either a vine, figs? *so can* no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

The foregoing chapter shews how unprofitable and dead faith is without works; it is plainly intimated by what this chapter first goes upon, that such a faith is, however, apt to make men conceited and magisterial in their tempers and their talk. Those who set up faith in the manner the former chapter condemns, are most apt to run into

those sins of the tongue, which this chapter condemneth. And indeed the best need to be cautioned against a dictating, censorious, mischievous use of their tongues. We are therefore taught,

I. Not to use our tongues so as to lord it over others, *ver. 1. My brethren, be not many masters, &c.* These words do not forbid doing what we can to direct and instruct others in the way of their duty, or to reprove them in a Christian way for what is amiss; but we must not affect to speak and act as those that are continually assuming the chair. We must not prescribe to one another, so as to make our own sentiments a *standard*, by which to try all others; because God gives various gifts to men, and expects from each according to that measure of light which he gives. Therefore be not many masters, or teachers, as some read it. Do not give your selves the air of teachers, and imposers and judges, but rather speak with the humility and spirit of learners. Do not censure one another, as if all must be brought to your standard. This is enforced by two reasons. 1. Those who thus set up for judges and censurers, *shall receive the greater condemnation*. Our judging others will but make our own judgment the more strict and severe, *Mat. vii. 1.* Those who are curious to spy out the fruits of others, and arrogant in passing censures upon them, may expect that God will be as extreme in marking what they say and do amiss. 2. Another reason given against such acting the master, is, because *we are all sinners, ver. 2. In many things we offend all*. Were we to think more on our own mistakes and offences, we should be less apt to judge other people. Whilst we are severe against what we count offensive in others, we do not consider how much there is in us which is justly offensive to them. Self-justifiers are commonly self-deceivers. We are all guilty before God. And they that vaunt it over the frailties and infirmities of others, little think how many things they offend in themselves. Nay, perhaps, their magisterial managements, and censorious tongues, may prove worse, than any faults they condemn in others. Let us learn to be severe in judging our selves, but charitable in our judgments of other people.

II. We are taught to govern our tongues so as to *prove our selves perfect and upright men*, and such as have an *intire government over our selves*. *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body*. It is here implied, that he who makes conscience of tongue-sins, and takes care to avoid them, is an upright man, and has an undoubted sign of true grace. But on the other hand, *if a man seem to be religious* (as was declared in the first chapter) *and bridle not his tongue*; whatever profession he makes, *that man's religion is vain*. Farther, he that offends not in word, will not only prove himself a sincere Christian, but a very much advanced and improved Christian. For that wisdom and grace which enables him to rule his tongue, will enable him also to rule all his actions. This we have illustrated by two comparisons.

1. The governing and guiding all the motions of a horse, by the bit which is put into his mouth, *ver. 3. Behold, we put bits in the horses mouths, that they may obey us, and we turn about their whole body*. There is a great deal of brutish fierceness and wantonness in us. This shews it self very much by the tongue: So that this must be bridled; according to *Psal. xxix. 1. I will keep my mouth with a bridle* [or I will bridle my mouth] *while the wicked is before me*. The more quick and lively the tongue is, the more should we thus take care to govern it. Otherwise, as an unruly and ungovernable horse runs away with his rider, or throws him; so an unruly tongue will serve those in like manner that have no command over it. Whereas, let resolution and watchfulness, under the influence of the grace of God, bridle the tongue, and then all the motions and actions of the whole body will be easily guided and over-ruled.

2. The governing of a ship by the right management of the helm. *ver. 4, 5. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm whithersoever the governor listeth: Even so, the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things*. As the helm is a very small part of the ship, so is the tongue a very small part of the body: But the right governing of the helm or rudder, will steer and turn the ship as the governor pleases; and a right management of the tongue is, in a great measure, the government of the whole man. There is a wonderful beauty in these comparisons, to shew how things of small bulk, yet may be of vast use. And from hence we should learn to make the due management of our tongues more our study; because, though they are little members, they are capable of doing a great deal of good, or a great deal of hurt. Therefore,

III. We are taught to dread an unruly tongue, as one of the greatest and *most pernicious evils*. It is compared to a little fire placed among a great deal of combustible matter, which soon raises a flame and consumes all before it, *ver. 5, 6. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth; and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, &c.* There is such an abundance of sin in the tongue, that it may be called a world of iniquity. How many defilements does it occasion? How many and dreadful flames does it kindle? *So is the tongue among the members, that it defileth the whole body*. Observe from hence, there is a great pollution and defilement in sins of the tongue. Defiling passions are kindled, and vented, and cherished by this unruly member. And the whole body is often drawn into sin and guilt by the tongue. Therefore Solomon says, *suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin, Eccles. v. 6.* The snares into which men are sometimes

times led by the tongue, are insufferable to themselves, and destructive of others. It setteth on fire the course of nature. The affairs of mankind, and of societies, are often thrown into confusion, and all is on a flame by the tongues of men. Some read it, all our generations are set on fire by the tongue. There is no age of the world, nor any condition of life private or publick, but will afford examples of this. *And it is set on fire of hell.* Observe from hence, that hell has more to do in promoting the fire of the tongue than men are generally aware of. It is from some diabolical temptations, and to serve some diabolical designs, that mens tongues are enflamed. The devil is expressly called a liar, a murderer, an accuser of the brethren; and whenever mens tongues are employed any of these ways, they are set on fire of hell. The holy Ghost indeed once descended in *cloven tongues as of fire*, Acts ii. And where the tongue is thus guided and wrought upon by a fire from heaven, there it kindleth good thoughts, holy affections, and ardent devotions. But when it is set on fire of hell, as in all undue heats it is, there it is mischievous; producing rage and hatred, and those things which serve the purposes and designs of the devil. As therefore you would dread fires and flames, you should dread contentions, revilings, slanders, lyes, and every thing that would kindle the fire of wrath in your own or others spirits. But,

IV. We are next taught *how very hard a thing it is*, to govern the tongue, ver. 7, 8. *For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame.* As if the apostle had said, lions, and the most savage beasts, as well as horses and camels, and creatures of the greatest strength, have been tamed and governed by men: And so have birds, notwithstanding their wildness and timorousness, and their wings to bear them up continually out of our reach. And even serpents, notwithstanding all their venom, and all their cunning, yet have been made familiar and harmless. And things in the sea have been taken by men, and made serviceable to them. And these creatures have not been subdued or tamed only by miracles; (as the lions crouched to Daniel, instead of devouring him; and ravens fed Elijah; and a whale carried Jonah through the depths of the sea to dry land) but what is here spoken of is something commonly done; not only hath been tamed, but is tamed of mankind. Yet the tongue is worse than these, and cannot be tamed by that power and art which serves to tame these things. No man can tame the tongue, without supernatural grace and assistance. The apostle does not intend to represent it as a thing impossible, but as a thing extremely difficult; and therefore will require great watchfulness, and pains, and prayer to keep it in due order. And sometimes all is too little *for it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.* Brute creatures may be kept within certain bounds, they may be managed by certain rules, and even serpents may be so used as to do no hurt with all their poison: But the tongue is apt to break through all bounds and rules, and to spit out its poison on one occasion or other, notwithstanding the utmost care. So that it does not need only to be watched, and guarded, and governed as much as an unruly beast, or a hurtful and poisonous creature; but much more care and pains will be needful to prevent the mischievous outbursts and effects of the tongue. However,

V. We are taught to think of the use we make of our tongues in religion, and in the service of God, and by such a consideration to keep it from cursing, censuring, and every thing that is evil on other occasions, ver. 9, 10. *Therewith bless we God even the Father; and therewith curse we men which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing: My brethren, these things ought not so to be.* How absurd it is, that they who use their tongues in prayer and praise, should ever use them in cursing, slandering, and the like? If we bless God as our Father, it should teach us to speak well of, and kindly to, all that bear his image. That tongue that addresses with reverence to the divine being, cannot, without the greatest inconsistency, turn upon fellow creatures with reviling, brawling language. It is said of the seraphim that praise God, they *dare not bring a railing accusation.* And for men to reproach those who have not only the image of God in their natural faculties, but are renewed after the image of God by the grace of the gospel, this is a most shameful contradiction to all their pretensions of honouring the great original. *These things ought not so to be;* and, if such considerations were always at hand, surely they would not be. Piety is disgraced in all the shews of it, if there be not charity. That tongue confutes it self, that one while pretends to adore the perfections of God, and to refer all things to him, and another while will condemn even good men, if they do not just come up to the same words or expressions used by it self.

Farther, to fix this thought, the apostle shews that contrary effects from the same cause are monstrous, and not to be found in nature; and therefore cannot be consistent with grace, ver. 11, 12. *Doth a fountain send forth, at the same place, sweet water and bitter? Can the fig-tree bear olive-berries? either a vine, figs? Or doth the same spring yield both salt water and fresh?* True religion will not admit of contradictions; and a truly religious man can never allow of them either in his words or his actions. How many sins would this prevent, and recover men from, to put them upon being always consistent with themselves!

13. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge amongst you? let him shew out of a good conversation his

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works with meekness of wisdom. 14. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lye not against the truth. 15. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. 16. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion, and every evil work. 17. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. 18. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

As the sins before condemned arise from an affectation of being thought more wise than others, and being endued with more knowledge than they; so the apostle in these verses shews the difference betwixt mens pretending to be wise, and their being really so; and betwixt wisdom which is from beneath, from earth or hell, and that which is from above.

I. We have some account of true wisdom, with the distinguishing marks and fruits of it, ver. 13. *Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge amongst you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.* A truly wise man is a very knowing man: He will not set up for the reputation of being wise, without laying in a good stock of knowledge; and he will not value himself merely upon knowing things, if he has not wisdom to make a right application, and use of that knowledge. These two things must be put together, to make up the account of true wisdom: who is wise, and endued with knowledge? Now where this is the happy case of any, there will be these following things.

1. *A good conversation.* If we are wiser than others, this should be evidenced by the goodness of our conversation; not by the roughness or vanity of it. Words that inform, and heal, and do good, are the marks of wisdom; and not those that look great, and do mischief, and are the occasions of evil, either in our selves or others.

2. True wisdom may be known by its works. The conversation here does not refer only to words, but to the whole of mens practice; therefore it is said, let him shew out of a good conversation his works. True wisdom does not lie in good notions or speculations so much, as in good and useful actions. Not he that thinks well, or he that talks well, that in the sense of scripture is allowed to be wise, if he do not live and act well.

3. True wisdom may be known by the meekness of the spirit and temper. *Let him shew with meekness, &c.* It is a great instance of wisdom prudently to bridle our own anger, and patiently to bear the anger of others. And as wisdom will evidence it self in meekness, so meekness will be a great friend to wisdom. For nothing hinders that regular apprehension, solid judgment and impartiality of thought, which is necessary to our acting wisely, so much as passion doth. When we are mild and calm, we are best able to hear reason, and best able to speak it. Wisdom produces meekness, and meekness encreaseth wisdom.

II. We have the glorying of those taken away, that are of a contrary character to that now mentioned; and their wisdom exposed in all its boasts and productions, ver. 14, 15, 16. *If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, &c.* Pretend what you will, and think your selves never so wise, yet you have abundance of reason to cease your glorying, if you run down love and peace, and give way to bitter envying and strife. Your zeal for truth or orthodoxy, and your boasts of knowing more than others, if you do this only to make others hateful, and to shew your own spite, and heart-burnings against them, is a shame to your profession of Christianity, and a downright contradiction to it. Lye not thus against the truth.

Observe, 1. That envying and strife are opposed to the meekness of wisdom. The heart is the seat of both; but envy and wisdom cannot dwell together in the same heart. Holy zeal and bitter envying are as different as the flames of seraphim and the fire of hell. Observe, 2. *The order of things here laid down.* Envying is first, and excites strife; strife endeavours to excuse it self by vain-glorying and lying; and then, ver. 16. hereupon ensues *confusion and every evil work.* Those that live in malice, and envy, and contention, they live in confusion; and are liable to be provoked and hurried to any evil work. Such disorders raise many temptations, and strengthen temptations, and involve men in a great deal of guilt. One sin begets another; and it cannot be imagined how much mischief is produced; there is every evil work. And is such wisdom to be gloried in, as produces these effects? This cannot be without giving the lye to Christianity; and pretending that this wisdom is, what it is not. For observe, 3. From whence such wisdom cometh. *It descendeth not from above, but ariseth from beneath;* and, to speak plainly, it is *earthly, sensual, devilish*, ver. 15. It springs from earthly principles, and acts upon earthly motives, and is intent upon serving earthly purposes. It is sensual, indulging the flesh and making provision to fulfil the lusts and desires of it. Or according to the original word, *ψυχικὴ*, it is animal or human; the meer working of natural reason, without any supernatural light. And it is devilish; such wisdom being the wisdom of devils, to create uneasiness, and to do no hurt. And being inspired by devils, whose condemnation is pride, 1 Tim. iii. 6. and

who are noted in other places of scripture for their wrath, and their accusing of the brethren. And therefore those, who are lifted up with such wisdom as this, must fall into the condemnation of the devil.

III. We have the lovely picture of that wisdom which is from above more fully drawn, and set in opposition to this which is from beneath, ver. 17, 18. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, &c.

Observe here, that true wisdom is God's gift. It is not gained by conversing with men, or by the knowledge of the world (as some think and speak) but it comes from above. And it consists of these several things: 1. It is pure, without mixture of maxims or aims that would debase it. And it is free from iniquity and defilements, not allowing of any known sin, but studious of holiness both in heart and life. 2. The wisdom that is from above is peaceable. Peace follows purity, and depends upon it. Those who are truly wise, do what they can to preserve peace, that it may not be broken; and to make peace, that where it is lost it may be restored. In kingdoms, in families, in churches, in all societies, and in all affairs and converses, heavenly wisdom makes men peaceable. 3. It is gentle, not standing upon extream right, in matters of property; not saying or doing any thing rigorous in points of censure; not being furious about opinions; urging our own beyond their weight, or theirs who oppose us beyond their intention; not being rude, and overbearing in conversation, nor harsh and cruel in temper. Gentleness may thus be opposed to all these. 4. Heavenly wisdom is easy to be entreated, *ἐπιεικής*, it is very persuadable, either to what is good, or from what is evil. There is an easiness that is weak and faulty; but it is not a blameable easiness to yield ourselves to the persuasions of God's word; and to all just and reasonable counsels or requests of our fellow-creatures; no nor to give up a dispute where there appears a good reason for it, and a good end may be answered by it. 5. Heavenly wisdom is full of mercy and good fruits. Inwardly disposed to every thing that is kind and good, both to relieve those that want, and forgive those that offend, and actually to do this whenever proper occasions offer. 6. Heavenly wisdom is without partiality. The original word, *ἀνιδεός*, signifies to be without suspicion, or free from judging. Making no undue surmises, or differences in our carriage toward one person more than another. The margin reads it without wrangling. Not acting the part of sectaries, and disputing merely for the sake of a party; or censuring others purely on account of their differing from us. The wisest men are least apt to be censurers. 7. That wisdom which is from above is without hypocrisy. It has no disguises or deceptions. It cannot fall in with those managements the world counts wise, which are crafty and guileful; but it is sincere, and open, and steady, and uniform, and consistent with itself. O that you and I might always be guided by such wisdom as this! That with St. Paul we might be able to say, *not with fleshly wisdom, but in simplicity and godly sincerity, by the grace of God, we have our conversation.* And then lastly, true wisdom will go on to sow the fruits of righteousness in peace, and thus, if it may be, to make peace in the world, ver. 18. And that which is sown in peace will produce a harvest of joys. Let others reap the fruits of contentions, and all the advantages they can propose to themselves by them; but let us go on peaceably to sow the seeds of righteousness, and we may depend upon it our labour shall not be lost. *For light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart; and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever.*

C H A P. IV.

In this chapter we are directed to consider, 1. Some causes of contention, besides those mentioned in the foregoing chapter, and to watch against them, ver. 1, — 5. 2. We are taught to abandon the friendship of this world, so as to submit and subject our selves intirely to God, ver. 4, — 10. 3. All detraction and rash judgment of others is to be carefully avoided, ver. 11, 12. 4. We must preserve a constant regard, and pay the utmost deference to the disposal of divine providence, ver. 13. to the end.

I. FROM whence come wars and fightings among you? *come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members?* 2. Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. 3. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. 4. Ye adulterers, and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God. 5. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? 6. But he giveth more grace: wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. 7. Submit your selves therefore to God; resist the devil, and he will flee from you: 8. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you: cleanse your hands, ye sinners, and purifie your hearts, ye double minded. 9. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourn-

ing, and your joy to heaviness. 10. Humble your selves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

The former chapter speaks of envying one another, as the great spring of strifes and contentions; this chapter speaks of a lust after worldly things, and a setting too great value upon worldly pleasures and friendships, as that which carried their divisions to a shameful height; and therefore the apostle here,

1. Reproves the Jewish Christians for their wars, and for their lusts, as the cause of them, ver. 1. *From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts, that war in your members?* The Jews were a very seditious people, and had therefore frequent wars with the Romans; and they were a very quarrellsome, divided people, often fighting among themselves; and many of those corrupt Christians, against whose errors and vices this epistle was written, seem to have fallen in with the common quarrels; hereupon our apostle informs them, that the original of their wars and fightings was not (as they pretended) a true zeal for their country, and for the honour of God, but their prevailing lusts were the cause of all. Observe from hence, that many times what is sheltered and shrowded under a specious pretence of zeal for God, and religion, yet really comes from mens pride, malice, covetousness, ambition, and revenge: The Jews had many struggles with the Roman power, before they were entirely destroyed; they often unnecessarily embroiled themselves, and then fell into parties and factions about the different methods of managing their wars with their common enemies; and hence it comes to pass, that when their cause might be supposed good, yet their engaging in it, and their management of it, came from a bad principle; their worldly and fleshly lusts raised and managed their wars and fightings; but, one would think, here is enough said to subdue those lusts; for, 1. They make a war within, as well as fightings without; impetuous passions and desires first war in their members, and then raise leuds in their nation; there is war between conscience and corruption, and there is war also between one corruption and another; and from these contentions in themselves arose their quarrels with each other: Apply this to private cases, and may we not then say of fightings and strifes among relations and neighbours, that they come from those lusts which war in the members? From lust of power and dominion, lust of pleasures, or lust of riches, from some one or more of these lusts, arise all the broils and contentions that are in the world; and since all wars and fightings come from the corruptions of our own hearts, it is therefore the right method, for the cure of contention, to lay the ax to the root, and mortify those lusts that war in the members. 2. It should kill these lusts to think of their disappointment, ver. 2. *Ye lust, and have not, ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain;* you covet great things for yourselves, and you think to obtain them by your victories over the Romans, or by suppressing this and the other party among yourselves; you think you shall secure great pleasures, and happiness to yourselves, by overthrowing every thing which thwarts your eager wishes; but, alas, you are losing your labour, and your blood, while you kill one another with such views as these; inordinate desires are either totally disappointed, or, however, not to be appeased and satisfied by obtaining the things desired; the words here rendred, *cannot obtain*, signify, cannot gain the happiness sought after. Note hence, that worldly and fleshly lusts are a distemper which will not allow of contentment or satisfaction in the mind. 3. Sinful desires and affections generally exclude prayer, and the working of our desires towards God: *Ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not:* You fight, and do not succeed, because you do not pray: You do not consult God in your undertakings, whether he allow of them, or not; and you do not commit your way to him, and make known your requests to him, but follow your own corrupt views and inclinations, therefore you meet with continual disappointments; or else, 4. Your lusts spoil your prayers, and make them an abomination to God, whenever you put them up to him, ver. 3. *Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts.* As if it had been said, though, perhaps, you may sometimes pray for success against your enemies, yet it is not your aim to improve the advantages you gain, so as to promote true piety and religion, either in your selves or others; but pride, and vanity, and luxury, and sensuality, is what you would serve by your successes, and by your very prayers; you want to live in great power and plenty, in voluptuousness, and a sensual prosperity; and thus you disgrace devotion, and dishonour God, by such gross and base ends; and therefore your prayers are rejected.

Let us learn from hence, in the management of all our worldly affairs, and in our prayers to God for success in them, to see that our ends be right. When men follow their worldly business (suppose them tradesmen, or husbandmen) and ask of God prosperity, but do not receive what they ask for, it is because they ask with wrong aims and intentions; they ask God to give them success in their callings, or undertakings, not that they may glorify their heavenly Father, and do good with what they have, but that they may consume it upon their lusts; that they may be enabled to eat better meat, and drink better drink, and wear better clothes, and so gratify their pride, and vanity, and voluptuousness: But if we thus seek the things of this world, it is just in God to deny them; whereas, if we seek any thing that we may serve God with it, we may

may expect he will either give what we seek for, or give hearts to be content without it, and give opportunities of serving and glorifying him some other way: Let us remember this, that when we speed not in our prayers, it is *because we ask amiss*; either we do not ask for right ends, or not in a right manner; not with faith, or not with fervency; unbelieving and cold desires beg denials; and this we may be sure of, that when our prayers are rather the language of our lusts, than of our graces, they will return empty.

2. We have fair warning to avoid all criminal friendships with this world, *ver. 4. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?* Worldly people are here called *adulterers and adulteresses*, because of their perfidiousness to God, whilst they give their best affections to the world: *Covetousness* is elsewhere called *idolatry*, and it is here called *adultery*; it is a forsaking him, to whom we are devoted and espoused, to cleave to other things; there is this brand put upon worldly-mindedness, that it is *enmity to God*: A man may have a competent portion of the good things of this life, and yet may keep himself in the love of God; but he that sets his heart upon the world, that places his happiness in it, and will conform himself to it, and do any thing rather than lose its friendship, he is an *enemy to God*; it is constructive treason and rebellion against God, to set the world upon his throne in our hearts: *Whoever therefore would be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God*: He that will act upon this principle, to keep in the smiles of the world, and to have its continual friendship, cannot but shew himself in spirit, and in his actions too, an *enemy to God*: *Ye cannot serve God and mammon*, Matt. vi. 24.

From hence arise wars and fightings, even from this adulterous, idolatrous love of the world, and serving of it: For *what peace* can there be among men, so long as there is enmity towards God? Or, *who can fight against God, and prosper?* Think seriously with yourselves what the spirit of the world is, and you will find that you cannot suit yourselves to it as friends, but it must occasion your being envious, and full of evil inclinations, as the generality of the world are. *Do you think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?* *ver. 5.* The account given in the holy scriptures of the hearts of men by nature, is, *that their imagination is evil, only evil, and that continually*, Gen. vi. 5. natural corruption principally shews itself by envying, and there is a continual propensity to this; the spirit which naturally dwells in man, is always producing one evil imagination or another, always emulating such as we see and converse with, and seeking those things which are possessed and enjoyed by them; now this way of the world, affecting pomp and pleasure, and falling into strifes and quarrels for the sake of these things, is the certain consequence of being friends to the world; for there is no friendship without an oneness of spirit; and therefore Christians, to avoid contentions, must avoid *the friendship of the world*, and must shew that they are acted by nobler principles, and that a nobler spirit dwelleth in them; for if we belong to God, he giveth more grace than to live and act as the generality of the world do. The spirit of the world teaches men to be churls, God teaches them to be bountiful; the spirit of the world teaches us to lay up, or lay out for ourselves, and according to our own fancies. God teaches us to be *willing to communicate* to the necessities, and to the comfort of others, and so as to *do good* to all about us according to our ability; the grace of God is contrary to the spirit of the world, and therefore *the friendship of the world* is to be avoided, if we pretend to be *friends of God*: Yea, the grace of God will correct and cure the spirit that naturally dwells in us; where he giveth grace, he giveth another-guest's spirit than that of the world.

3. We are taught to observe the difference God makes betwixt pride and humility, *ver. 6. God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.* This is represented as the language of scripture in the Old Testament; for so it is declared in the book of *psalms*, *that God will save the afflicted people* (if their spirits be suited to their condition) *but will bring down high looks*, Psalm xviii. 27. and in the book of *Proverbs* it is said, *He scorneth the scornors, and giveth grace unto the lowly*, Prov. iii. 34. Two things are here to be observed: 1. The disgrace cast upon *the proud*; *God resisteth* them; the original word, *ἀντὶδρῶσται*, signifies, God's setting himself as in battle array against them; and can there be a greater disgrace than for God to proclaim a man a rebel, an enemy, a traitor to his crown and dignity, and to proceed against him as such? *The proud resisteth God*; in his understanding he resisteth the truths of God; in his will he resisteth the laws of God; in his passions he resisteth the providence of God; and therefore no wonder that God sets himself against *the proud*: Let proud spirits hear this, and tremble, *God resisteth* them. Who can describe the wretched state of those that make God their enemy? He will certainly fill the faces of such with shame, sooner or later, as have filled their hearts with pride: We should therefore resist pride in our hearts, if we would not have God to resist us. Observe, 2. The honour and help *God gives to the humble*; *grace*, as opposed to disgrace, is honour; this *God gives to the humble*; and where *God gives grace to be humble*, there he will give all other graces; and, as in the beginning of this sixth verse, he will *give more grace*: Wherever *God gives true grace*, he will *give more*; for *to him that hath*, and useth what he hath aright, *more shall be given*: He will especially give more *grace to the humble*, because they see their need of it, will pray for it, and

be thankful for it; and such shall have it: For this reason,

4. We are taught to submit ourselves intirely to God, *ver. 7. Submit yourselves therefore to God: Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* Christians should forsake *the friendship of the world*, and watch against that envy and pride which they see prevailing in natural men, and should, by grace, learn to glory in their submissions to God. *Submit yourselves to him*, as subjects to their prince, in duty, and, as one friend to another, in love and interest: *Submit your understandings to the truths of God*; *submit your wills to the will of God*, the will of his precept, the will of his providence. We are subjects, and, as such, must be submissive; not only through fear, but through love; *not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.* *Submit yourselves to God*, as considering how many ways you are bound to this, and as considering what advantage you will gain by it; for God will not hurt you by his dominion over you, but will do you good.

Now as this subjection and submission to God is what the devil most industriously strives to hinder, so we ought, with great care and steadiness, to resist his suggestions: If he would represent a tame yielding to the will and providence of God as what will bring calamities, and expose to contempt and misery, we must resist those suggestions of fear: If he would represent submissions to God as a hindrance to our outward ease, or worldly preferments, we must resist these suggestions of pride and sloth: If he would tempt us to lay any of our miseries, and crosses, and afflictions, to the charge of providence, so as that we might avoid them by following his directions instead of God's, we must resist these provocations to anger, *not fretting ourselves in any wise to do evil*: Let not the devil, in these or the like attempts, prevail upon you; but *resist him, and he will flee from you*: If we basely yield to temptations, the devil will continually follow us; but if we *put on the whole armour of God*, and stand it out against him, he will be gone from us: Resolution shuts and bolts the door against temptation.

5. We are directed how to carry it towards God in our becoming submissive to him, *ver. 8, 9, 10.* 1. *Draw nigh to God*; the heart, that has rebelled, must be brought to the foot of God; the spirit, that was distant and estranged from a life of communion and converse with God, must become acquainted with him; *draw nigh to God*, in his worship and institutions, and in every duty he requires of you. 2. *Cleanse your hands*; he that comes unto God must have clean hands; St. Paul therefore directs to *lift up holy hands, without wrath, and doubting*, 1 Tim. ii. 8. hands free from blood, and bribes, and every thing that is unjust or cruel, and free from every defilement of sin; he is not subject to God, who is a servant of sin; the hands must be cleansed by faith, repentance, and reformation, or it will be in vain for us to *draw nigh to God* in prayer, or in any of the exercises of devotion. 3. *The hearts of the double-minded must be purified*; those that halt between God and the world, are here meant by *the double-minded*; to *purify the heart*, is to be sincere, and to act upon this single aim and principle, rather to please God, than to seek after any thing in this world; hypocrisy is heart-impurity; but they who *submit themselves to God aright*, will *purify their hearts*, as well as *cleanse their hands*. 4. *Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep*; what afflictions God sends take them as he would have you, and be duly sensible of them; *be afflicted* when afflictions are sent upon you, and do not despise them; or, *be afflicted* in your sympathies with those that are so, and in laying to heart the calamities of the church of God; *mourn and weep* for your own sins, and the sins of others; times of contention and division, are times to *mourn* in; and the sins that occasion *wars and fightings* should be *mourned* for; *let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness*; this may be taken, either as a prediction of sorrow, or a prescription of seriousness; let men think to set grief at defiance, yet God can bring it upon them; none laugh so heartily, but he can *turn their laughter into mourning*; and this the unconcerned Christians St. James wrote to are threatened should be their case; they are therefore directed, before things come to the worst, to lay aside their vain mirth, and their sensual pleasures, that they might indulge godly sorrow, and penitential tears: 5. *Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord*; let the inward acts of the soul be suitable to all those outward expressions of grief, affliction, and sorrow, beforementioned; humility of spirit is here required, as in the sight of him who looks principally at the spirits of men; let there be thorow humiliation in a bewailing every thing that is evil; let there be great humility in doing that which is good; *humble yourselves*.

6. We have great encouragement to carry it thus towards God; *he will draw nigh to them that draw nigh to him*, *ver. 8.* and *he will lift up* those that humble themselves in his sight, *ver. 10.* Those that *draw nigh to God* in a way of duty, shall find God *drawing nigh to them* in a way of mercy: *Draw nigh to him* in faith, and trust, and obedience, and *he will draw nigh to you* for your deliverance: If there be not a close communion between God and us, it is our fault, and not his: *He shall lift up the humble*. Thus much our Lord himself declared, *He that shall humble himself, shall be exalted*, Matt. xxiii. 12. If we are truly penitent and humble under the marks of God's displeasure, we shall, in a little time, know the advantages of his favour; *he will lift us up* out of trouble, or *he will lift us up*, in our spirits and comforts, under trouble; *he will lift us up* to honour and safety in the world, or *he will lift*

lift us up in our way to heaven, so as to raise our hearts and affections above the world; *God will revive the spirit of the humble*, Isa. lvii. 15. *and he will bear the desire of the humble*, Psalm x. 17. and he will at last lift them up to glory: *Before honour is humility*. The highest honour in heaven will be the reward of the greatest humility on earth.

11. Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. 12. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another? 13. Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain: 14. Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow: For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. 15. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. 16. But now ye rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. 17. Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.

In this part of the chapter we are,

1. Cautioned against the sin of evil-speaking, ver. 11. *Speak not evil one of another, brethren*. The Greek word, *καταλαλῆτε*, signifies speaking any thing that may hurt or injure another; we must not speak evil things of others, though they are true, unless we be called to it, and there be some necessary occasion for it; much less must we report evil things when they are false, or, for ought we know, may be so; our lips must be guided by the law of kindness, as well as truth and justice; this, which Solomon makes a necessary part of the character of his virtuous woman, *that she openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness*, Prov. xxxi. 26. must needs be a part of the character of every true Christian. *Speak not evil one of another*, (1.) Because ye are brethren. The compellation, as used by the apostle here, carries an argument along with it: Since Christians are brethren, they should not revile or defame one another; it is required of us, that we be tender of the good name of our brethren; where we cannot speak well, we had better say nothing, than speak evil; we must not take pleasure in making known the faults of others, divulging things that are secret, merely to expose them; nor in making more of their known faults than really they deserve; and, least of all, in making false stories, and spreading things concerning them, of which they are altogether innocent; what is this but to raise the hatred, and encourage the persecutions of the world, against those who are engaged in the same interests with yourselves, and therefore with whom you yourselves must stand and fall? Consider ye are brethren. (2.) *Speak not evil one of another*, because this is to judge the law: *He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law*. The law of Moses says, *Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people*, Levit. xix. 16. The law of Christ is, *Judge not, that ye be not judged*, Matt. vii. 1. The sum and substance of both is, that men should love one another: A detraiting tongue therefore condemns the law of God, and the commandment of Christ, when it is defaming its neighbour: To break God's commandments is, in effect, to speak evil of them, and to judge them, as if they were too strict, and laid too great a restraint upon us. The Christians to whom St. James wrote were apt to speak very hard and ill things of one another, because of their differences about indifferent things (such as the observance of meats and days, as appears from Rom. xiv.) now, says the apostle, he that censures and condemns his brother for not agreeing with him in those things which the law of God has left indifferent, thereby censures and condemns the law, as if it had done ill in leaving them indifferent; he that quarrels with his brother, and condemns him for the sake of any thing not determined in the word of God, does thereby reflect on that word of God, as if it were not a perfect rule; let us take heed of judging the law, for the law of the Lord is perfect; if men break the law, leave that to judge them; if they do not break it, let not us judge them: This is an heinous evil, because it is to forget our place, that we ought to be doers of the law, and it is to set up ourselves above it, as if we were to be judges of it; he that is guilty of the sin here cautioned against, is not a doer of the law, but a judge; he assumes an office and place that does not belong to him, and he will be sure to suffer for it in the end: Those that are most ready to set up for judges of the law, generally fail most in their obedience to it. (3.) *Speak not evil one of another*, because God, the lawgiver, has reserved the power of passing the final sentence on men wholly to himself, ver. 12. *There is one lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?* Princes and states are not excluded, by what is here said, from making laws; nor are subjects at all encouraged to disobey human laws; but God is still to be acknowledged as the supreme lawgiver, who only can give law to the conscience, and who alone is to be absolutely obeyed; his right to enact laws is incontestable, because he has such a power to enforce them; he is able to save, and to destroy, so as none other can; he has power fully to reward the obser-

vance of his laws, and to punish all disobedience; he can save the soul, and make it happy for ever; or he can, after he has killed, cast into hell; and therefore should be feared and obeyed as the great lawgiver, and all judgment should be committed to him. Since there is one lawgiver, we may infer, that it is not for any man, or company of men in the world, to pretend to give laws immediately to bind conscience; for that is God's prerogative which must not be invaded: As the apostle had before warned against being many masters, so here he cautions against being many judges; let us not prescribe to our brethren, let us not censure and condemn them; it is sufficient that we have the law of God, which is a rule to us all; and therefore we should not set up other rules; let us not presume to set up our own particular notions and opinions as a rule to all about us; there is one lawgiver, &c.

2. We are cautioned against a presumptuous confidence of the continuance of our lives, and against forming projects thereupon with assurance of success, ver. 13, 14. The apostle having reproved those who were judges and condemners of the law, now reproves such as were disregarding of providence: *Go to now, an old way of speaking, designed to engage attention, the Greek word may be rendered, behold now! or, see, and consider! ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain*. Reflect a little on this way of thinking and talking, call yourselves to account for it. Serious reflection on our words and ways, would shew us many evils that we are apt, through inadvertency, to run into, and continue in. There were some that said of old, as too many say still, *We will go to such a city, and do this, or that*, for such a term of time, whilst all serious regards to the disposals of providence were neglected. Observe here,

(1.) How apt worldly and projecting men are to leave God out of their schemes; where any are set upon earthly things, these have a strange power of engrossing the thoughts of the heart; we should therefore have a care of growing intent or eager in our pursuits after any thing here below. Observe, (2.) How much of a worldly happiness lies in the promises men make to themselves beforehand; their heads are full of fine visions, as to what they shall do, and be, and enjoy in some future time, when they can neither be sure of time, nor of any of the advantages they promise themselves; therefore observe, (3.) How vain a thing it is to look for any thing good in futurity, without the concurrence of providence: *We will go to such a city*, (say they) perhaps, to Antioch, or Damascus, or Alexandria, which were then the great places for traffick; but how could they be sure, when they set out, that they should reach any of these cities? something might possibly stop their way, or call them elsewhere, or cut the thread of life: Many that have set out in a journey, have gone to their long home, and never reached their journey's end: But, suppose they should reach the city they designed for, how did they know they should continue there? something might happen to send them back, or to call them from thence, and to shorten their stay: Or, suppose they should stay the full time they proposed, yet they could not be certain that they should buy and sell there, perhaps, they might lie sick there, or they might not meet with those to trade with them that they expected: Yea, suppose they should go to that city, and continue there a year, and should buy, and sell, yet they might not get gain; getting of gain in this world is at best but an uncertain thing, and they might, probably, make more losing bargains than gainful ones; and then, as to all these particulars, the frailty, and shortness, and uncertainty of life, ought to check the vanity and presumptuous confidence of such projectors for futurity, ver. 14. *What is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*. God hath wisely left us in the dark concerning future events, and even concerning the duration of life itself; we know not what shall be on the morrow; we may know what we intend to do, and to be, but a thousand things may happen to prevent us; we are not sure of life itself, since it is but as a vapour; something in appearance, but nothing solid, or certain; easily scattered and gone: We can fix the hour and minute of the sun's rising and setting to morrow, but we cannot fix the certain time of a vapour's being scattered; such is our life; it appears but for a little time, and then vanisheth away; it vanisheth as to this world, but there is a life that will continue in the other world; and since this life is so uncertain, it concerns us all to prepare, and lay up in store for that to come.

3. We are taught to keep up a constant sense of our dependence on the will of God, for life, and all the actions and enjoyments of it, ver. 15. *Ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that*. The apostle having reproved them for what was amiss, now directs them how to be and do better: *Ye ought to say* it in your hearts at all times, and with your tongues upon proper occasions, especially in your constant prayers and devotions, that if the Lord will give leave, and if he will own and bless you, that you have such and such designs to accomplish; this must be said, not in a slight, and formal, and customary way, but so as to think what we say, and so as to be reverent and serious in what we say: It is good to express ourselves thus when we have to do with others, but it is indispensably requisite that we should say this to ourselves in all that we go about. *Σὺν Θεῷ*, i. e. with the leave and blessing of God, was used by the Greeks in the beginning of every undertaking. 1. *If the Lord will, we shall live*. We must remember that

that our times are not in our own hands, but at the disposal of God; we live as long as God appoints, and in the circumstances God appoints, and therefore must be submissive to him, even as to life itself; and then, 2. *If the Lord will, we shall do this, or that.* All our actions and designs are under the controul of heaven; our heads may be filled with cares and contrivances, this and the other thing we may propose to do for ourselves, or our families, or our friends, but providence sometimes breaks all our measures, and throws our schemes into confusion; therefore both our counsels for action, and our conduct in action, should be intirely referred to God; all we design, and all we do, should be with a submissive dependence on God.

4. We are directed to avoid vain-boasting, and to look upon it, not only as a weak, but a very evil thing, *ver. 16. Ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil.* They promised themselves life, and prosperity, and great things in the world, without any just regards to God, and then they boasted of these things: Such is the joy of worldly people, to boast of all their successes, yea, many times, to boast of their very projects before they know what success they shall have! How common is it for men to boast of things, which they have no other title to, but what arises from their own vanity and presumption! *Such rejoicing* (says the apostle) *is evil*; it is foolish, and it is hurtful; for men to boast of worldly things, and of their aspiring projects, when they should be attending to the humbling duties before laid down (in *ver. 8, 9, 10.*) is a very ill thing; it is a great sin in God's account, it will bring great disappointments upon themselves, and will prove their destruction in the end: If we *rejoice in God*, that our times are in his hand, that all events are at his disposal, and that he is our God in covenant, this *rejoicing is good*; the wisdom, power, and providence of God, are then concerned to make *all things work together for our good*; but if we *rejoice in our own vain confidences*, and presumptuous boasts, this *is evil*; it is an evil carefully to be avoided by all wise and good men.

5. We are taught, in the whole of our conduct, to act up to our own convictions, and, whether we have to do with God or men, to see that we never go contrary to our own knowledge, *ver. 17. To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin*; it is aggravated sin; it is sinning with a witness; and it is to have the worst witness against a man that can be, when he sins against his own conscience. Observe, that this stands immediately connected to the plain lesson of saying, *If the Lord will, we shall do this, or that*; they might be ready to say, this is a very obvious thing; who knows not that we all depend upon almighty God for life, and breath, and all things? remember then, if you do know this, that whenever you carry it unsuitably to such a dependence, *to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin*, the greater sin. Observe again, that omissions are sins which will come into judgment, as well as commissions; he *that does not the good he knows should be done*, as well as he that does the evil he knows should not be done, will be condemned; let us therefore take care that conscience be rightly informed, and then that it be faithfully and constantly obeyed; for if *our own hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God*; but if *we say we see*, and do not act suitably to our sight, *then our sin remaineth*, John ix. 41.

CHAP. V.

In this chapter the apostle denounces the judgments of God upon those rich men that oppress the poor, shewing them how great their sin and folly is in the sight of God, and how grievous the punishments would be which should fall upon themselves, *ver. 1,—6.* Hereupon all the faithful are exhorted to patience under their trials and sufferings, *ver. 7,—11.* The sin of swearing is cautioned against, *ver. 12.* We are directed how to carry it, both under affliction, and in prosperity, *ver. 13.* Prayer for the sick, and anointing with oil, are prescribed, *ver. 14, 15.* Christians are directed to acknowledge their faults one to another, and to pray one for another, and the efficacy of prayer is proved, *ver. 16,—18.* And, lastly, it is recommended to us to do what we can for the reducing of them that stray from the ways of truth.

1. **G**O to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. 2. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. 3. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire: ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. 4. Behold, the hire of the labourers, which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped, are entred into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. 5. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter. 6. Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you. 7. Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord: Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. 8. Be ye also

patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. 9. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door. 10. Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. 11. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord: that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.

The apostle is here addressing first to sinners, and then to saints.

I. Let us consider the address to sinners; and here we find St. James seconding what his great Master had said, *Wo unto you that are rich; for ye have received your consolation*, Luke vi. 24. The rich people, to whom this word of warning is sent, were not such as professed the Christian religion, but the worldly and unbelieving Jews, such as are here said to *condemn and kill the just*, which the Christians had no power to do; and though this epistle was written for the sake of the faithful, and was sent principally to them, yet, by an apostrophe, the infidel Jews may be well supposed here spoken to; they would not hear the word, and therefore it is written that they might read it; and it is observable, in the inscription of this epistle, that it is not directed, as Paul's epistles were, *to the brethren in Christ*, but, in general, *to the twelve tribes*; and the salutation is not, *grace and peace from Christ*, but, in general, *greeting*, chap. i. 1. The poor among the Jews received the gospel, and many of them believed, but the generality of the rich rejected Christianity, and were hardened in their unbelief, and hated and persecuted those that believed on Christ; to these oppressing, unbelieving, persecuting rich people the apostle directs himself in the first address.

(1.) He foretels the judgments of God that should come upon them, *ver. 1, 3.* they should have *miseries come upon them*, and such dreadful *miseries*, that the very apprehension of them were enough to make them *weep and howl*; *miser* that should arise from the very things in which they placed their happiness, and *miser* that should be completed by these things *witnessing against them*, at the last, to their utter destruction; and they are now called to reason upon, and thoroughly to weigh the matter, and to think how they will stand before God in judgment: *Go to now, ye rich men.* 1. You may be assured of this, that very dreadful calamities are coming upon you, calamities that shall carry nothing of support or comfort in them, but all *miser*, *miser* in time, *miser* to eternity; *miser* in your outward afflictions, *miser* in your inward frame and temper of mind; *miser* in this world, *miser* in hell: You have not a single instance of *miser* only coming upon you, but *miseries*; the ruin of your church and nation is at hand; and there will come a day of wrath when riches shall not profit men, but *all the wicked shall be destroyed.* 2. The very apprehension of such *miseries* as were coming upon them, is enough to make them *weep and howl*: *Rich men* are apt to say to themselves (and others are ready to say to them) *eat, drink, and be merry*; but God says, *weep and howl*: It is not said, *weep and repent*, for this the apostle does not expect from them; (he speaks in a way of denouncing rather than admonishing) but *weep and howl*; as when your doom comes there will be nothing but *weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth*; those that live like beasts, are called to *howl* like such: Publick calamities are most grievous to rich people, that live in pleasure, and are secure, and sensual; and therefore they shall *weep and howl* more than other people *for the miseries that shall come upon them.* 3. Their *miser* shall arise from the very things in which they placed their happiness; corruption, decay, rust, and ruin, will come upon all your goodly things, *ver. 2. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten*: These things, which you now inordinately affect, will hereafter insupportably wound you: They will be of no worth, of no use to you, but, on the contrary, will *pierce you through with many sorrows*: For, 4. *They will witness against you, and they will eat your flesh as it were fire*, *ver. 3.* Things inanimate are frequently represented in scripture as witnessing against wicked men: Heaven, earth, the stones of the field, the production of the ground, and here the very rust and canker of ill-gotten, and ill-kept treasures, are said to witness against impious rich men; they think to *heap up treasure for their last days*, to live plentifully upon when they come to be old; but, alas! they are only heaping up treasures to become a prey to others; (as the Jews had all taken from them by the Romans) and treasures that will prove at last to be only *treasures of wrath, in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God*; then shall their iniquities, in the punishment of them, *eat their flesh as it were fire*: In the ruin of Jerusalem, many thousands perished by fire; in the last judgment *the wicked shall be condemned to everlasting burnings, prepared for the devil and his angels.*

The Lord deliver us from the portion of wicked rich men! and, in order to this, let us take care that we do not fall into their sins, which we are next to consider.

(2.) The apostle shews what those sins are which should bring such *miseries*: To be in so deplorable a condition, must, doubtless, be owing to some very heinous crimes: 1. Covetousness is laid to the charge of this people; they laid by their garments till they bred

moths, and were *eaten*; they hoarded up their *gold and silver* till they were *rusty, and cankered*; it is a very great disgrace to these things, that they carry in them the principles of their own corruption and consumption; the *garment* breeds the *moth* that frets it, the *gold and silver* breeds the *canker* that eats it; but the disgrace falls most heavy upon those who hoard and lay up these things till they come to be thus *corrupted, and cankered, and eaten*: God gives us our worldly possessions that we may honour him, and do good with them; but if, instead of that, we sinfully hoard them up, through an undue affection toward them, or a distrust of the providence of God for the future, this is a very heinous crime, and will be witnessed against by the very rust and corruption of the treasure thus heaped together. 2. Another sin charged upon those against whom St. James writes is oppression, *ver. 4. Behold the hire of the labourers, which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, &c.* Those that have wealth in their hands, get power into their hands, and then they are tempted to abuse that power, to oppress such as are under them: The rich we here find employing the poor in their labours, and the rich have as much need of the labours of the poor, as the poor have of wages from the rich, and could as ill be without them; but yet, not considering this, *they kept back the hire of the labourers*; having power in their hands, it is probable, they made as hard bargains with the poor as they could; and, even after that, would not make good their bargain, as they should have done: This is a crying sin, an iniquity that cries so, as to reach *the ears of God*; and, in this case, God is to be considered as *the Lord of sabaoth*, or, *the Lord of hosts*, *κύριος σαβαωθ*; a phrase often used in the Old Testament, when the people of God were defenceless, and wanted protection; and when their enemies were numerous, and powerful: *The Lord of hosts*, who has all ranks of beings and creatures at his disposal, and who sets all in their several places, he hears *the oppressed when they cry, by reason of the cruelty, or injustice of the oppressor*, and he will give orders to some of those hosts that are under him (angels, devils, storms, distempers, or the like) to avenge the wrongs done to those who are dealt with unrighteously, and unmercifully: Take heed of this sin of defrauding and oppressing, and avoid the very appearances of it. 3. Another sin here mentioned is sensuality and voluptuousness, *ver. 5. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton, &c.* God doth not forbid us to use pleasures; but to live in them, as if we lived for nothing else, is a very provoking sin; and to do this *on the earth*, where we are but *strangers and pilgrims*, where we are to continue but for a while, and where we ought to be preparing for eternity; this, this is a grievous aggravation of the sin of voluptuousness: Luxury makes people *wanton*, as in *Hos. xiii. 6. According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me.* Wantonness and luxury are commonly the effects of great plenty and abundance; it is hard for people to have great estates, and not too much indulge themselves in carnal, sensual pleasures: *Ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter*: Ye live as if it was every day a day of sacrifices, a festival; and hereby *your hearts* are fattened and *nourished* to stupidity, and dulness, and pride, and an insensibility of the wants and afflictions of others. Why, some may say, what harm is there in good cheer, provided people do not spend above what they have? What! Is it no harm for people to make gods of their bellies, and to give all to these, instead of abounding in acts of charity and piety? Is it no harm for people to unfit themselves for minding the concerns of their souls, by indulging to the appetites of their bodies? Surely that which brought flames upon Sodom, and would bring these *miseries*, for which *rich men* are here called to *weep and howl*, must be an heinous evil! *Pride, and idleness, and fulness of bread*, mean the same thing with *living in pleasure, and being wanton, and nourishing the heart as in a day of slaughter*. 4. Another sin here charged on the rich was persecution, *ver. 6. Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you.* This *fills up the measure of their iniquity*. They oppressed, and acted very unjustly, to get estates; when they had them, they gave way to luxury and sensuality till they had lost all sense and feeling of others wants, or afflictions; and then they persecute and kill without remorse; they pretend to act legally indeed, they condemn before they kill; but unjust prosecutions, whatever colour of law they may carry in them, will come into the reckoning *when God shall make inquisition for blood*, as well as massacres and downright murders. Observe here, that *the just* may be *condemned and killed*; but then again observe, that when such do suffer, and, without resistance, yield to the unjust sentence of oppressors, that this is marked by God to the honour of the sufferers, and the infamy of their persecutors; this commonly shews that judgments are at *the door*, and we may certainly conclude, that a reckoning day will come, to reward the patience of the oppressed, and to break to pieces the oppressor; thus far the address to sinners goes.

II. We have next subjoined an address to saints; some have been ready to despise, or to condemn this way of preaching, when ministers, in their application, have brought a word to sinners, and a word to saints; but, from the apostle's here taking this method, we may conclude, that this is the best way rightly to divide the word of truth: From what has been said concerning wicked and oppressing rich men, occasion is given to administer comfort to God's afflicted people: *Be patient therefore, since God will send such miseries on*

the wicked, you may see what is your duty, and where your greatest encouragement lies.

(1.) Attend to your duty; *be patient*, *ver. 7. Stablish your hearts*, *ver. 8. grudge not one against another, brethren*, *ver. 9.* Consider well the meaning of these three expressions: 1. *Be patient*; bear your afflictions without murmuring, your injuries without revenge; and though God should not in any signal manner appear for you immediately, *wait for him. The vision is for an appointed time, at the end it will speak, and will not lye; therefore wait for it: It is but a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.* Let your patience be lengthened out to long-suffering, as the word here used, *μακροθυμία*, signifies. *When we have done our work, we have need of patience to stay for our reward.* This Christian patience is not a meer yielding to necessity, as the moral patience taught by some philosophers was; but it is an humble acquiescing in the wisdom and will of God, with an eye to a future glorious recompence. *Be patient to the coming of the Lord.* And because this is a lesson Christians must learn, though never so hard or difficult to them, it is repeated in *ver. 8. Be ye also patient.* 2. *Stablish your hearts*; let your faith be firm, without wavering; your practice of what is good constant and continued, without tiring; and your resolutions for God and heaven fixed, in spite of all sufferings or temptations. The prosperity of the wicked, and the affliction of the righteous, have in all ages been a very great trial to the faith of the people of God; David tells us, *that his feet were almost gone, when he saw the prosperity of the wicked*, Psalm lxxiii. 2. And some of those Christians to whom St. James wrote, might, probably, be in the same tottering condition; and therefore they are called upon to *establish their hearts*; faith and patience will *establish the heart*. 3. *Grudge not one against another*; the words signify, *groan not one against another*, *μὴ σεμίζετε*; that is, do not make one another uneasy, by your murmuring groans, at what befalls you; or, by your distrustful groans, as to what may farther come upon you; or, by your revengeful groans, against the instruments of your sufferings; or, by your envious groans, at those who may be free from your calamities: Do not make yourselves uneasy, and make one another uneasy, by thus groaning to, and grieving one another. “The apostle seemeth to me (says Dr. Manton) to be here taxing those mutual injuries and animosities, wherewith the Christians of those times, having banded under the names of circumcision and uncircumcision, did grieve one another, and give each other cause to groan; so that they did not only sigh under the oppressions of the rich persecutors, but under the injuries which they sustained from many of the brethren, who, together with them, did profess the holy faith.” Those, who are in the midst of common enemies, and in any suffering circumstances, should be more especially careful not to grieve, or to groan against one another; or, otherwise, judgments will come upon them as well as others; and the more such grudgings prevail, the nearer do they shew judgment to be.

(2.) Consider what encouragement here is for Christians to *be patient*, to *stablish their hearts*, and *not to grudge one against another*: And, 1. Look to the example of *the husbandman*; *he waits for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.* When you sow your corn in the ground, you wait many months for the former and latter rain, and are willing to stay till harvest for the fruit of your labour; and shall not this teach you to bear a few storms, and to *be patient* for a season, when you are looking for a kingdom, and everlasting felicity? Consider him that waits for a crop of corn, and will not you wait for a crown of glory? If you should be called to wait a little longer than *the husbandman* does, is it not something proportionably greater, and infinitely more worth your waiting for? But, 2. Think how short your waiting time may possibly be, *ver. 8. The coming of the Lord draweth nigh*; and, *ver. 9. Behold, the judge standeth before the door*: Do not be impatient, do not quarrel with one another; the great Judge, who will set all to rights, who will punish the wicked, and reward the good, is at hand: He should be conceived by you to stand as near, as one that is just knocking at *the door*. *The coming of the Lord*, to punish the wicked Jews, was then very *nigh*, when St. James writ this epistle; and, whenever the patience and other graces of his people are tried in an extraordinary manner, the certainty of Christ's coming as judge, and the nearness of it, should *establish their hearts*: *The judge* is now a great deal nearer, in his coming to judge the world, than when this epistle was written; nearer by seventeen hundred years almost; and therefore this should have the greater effect upon us. 3. The danger of our being condemned when the judge appears, should excite us to mind our duty as before laid down; *grudge not, lest ye be condemned*: Fretfulness and discontent expose us *to the just judgment of God*, and we bring more calamities upon ourselves, by our murmuring, distrustful, envious groans and grudgings against one another, than we are aware of: If we avoid these evils, and *be patient* under our trials, God will not condemn us: Let us encourage ourselves with this. 4. We are encouraged to *be patient*, by the example of *the prophets*, *ver. 10. Take the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.* Observe here, that *the prophets*, on whom God put the greatest honour, and for whom he had the greatest favour, yet were most afflicted: And when we think that the best men have had the hardest

usage in this world, we should hereby be reconciled to *affliction*. Observe farther, that those who were the greatest *examples of suffering affliction*, are also the best and greatest *examples of patience*: *Tribulation worketh patience*. Hereupon St. James gives it us as the common sense of the faithful, *ver. 11. We count them happy which endure*: We look upon righteous and patient sufferers as the happiest people: See *chap. i. 2, — 12.* 5. Job also is proposed as an example, for the encouragement of the afflicted, *ver. 11. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord, &c.* In the case of Job you have an instance of a variety of miseries, and of such as are very grievous; but under all he could bless God, and, as to the general bent of his spirit, he was patient and humble; and what came to him in the end? Why, truly God accomplished, and brought about those things for him, that plainly prove *the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy*. The best way to bear afflictions, is to look to *the end of them*; and *the pity of God* is such, that he will not delay the bringing them to an *end*, when his purposes are once answered; and *the tender mercy of God* is such, that he will make his people an abundant amends for all their sufferings and afflictions; his bowels are moved for them whilst suffering, his bounty is manifested afterward; let us serve our God, and endure our trials, as those that believe *the end* will crown all.

12. But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea, be yea, and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation. 13. Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms. 14. Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: 15. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. 16. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed: the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. 17. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. 18. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. 19. Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20. Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

This epistle now drawing to a close, the penman goes off very quick from one thing to another; hence it is that matters so very different are insisted on in these few verses.

I. The sin of swearing is cautioned against, *ver. 12. But above all things, my brethren, swear not, &c.* Some understand this too strictly, as if the meaning was, *swear not at your persecutors, at those that reproach you, and say all manner of evil of you*; be not put into a passion, by the injuries they do you, so as in your passion to be provoked to swear; this swearing is, no doubt, forbidden here; and it will not excuse those that are guilty of this sin, to say, they swear only when they are provoked to it, and before they are aware: But the apostle's warning extends to other occasions of swearing as well as this; some have translated the words, *πρὸ πάντων, before all things*, and so have made the sense of this place to be, that they should not in common conversation, *before every thing they say*, put an oath: All customary, needless swearing is undoubtedly forbidden, and all along in scripture condemned, as a very grievous sin: Profane swearing was very customary among the Jews, and, since this epistle is directed in general to *the twelve tribes scattered abroad* (as before has been observed) we may conceive this exhortation sent to those who believed not: It is hard to suppose that swearing should be one of the spots of God's children, since Peter, when he was charged with being a disciple of Christ, and would disprove the charge, cursed and swore, thereby thinking most effectually to convince them that he was no disciple of Jesus, it being well known of such, that they durst not allow themselves in swearing; but possibly some of the looser sort of them that were called Christians might, amongst other sins here charged upon them, be guilty also of this: And it is a sin that in later years has most scandalously prevailed, even amongst those that would be thought above all others entitled to the Christian name and privileges: It is very rare indeed to hear of a dissenter from the church of England who is guilty of swearing, but amongst those who glory in their being of the established church nothing more common; and indeed the most execrable oaths and curses now daily wound the ears and hearts of all serious Christians. St. James here says, *above all things swear not*; but how many are there that mind this the least of all things? and that make light of nothing so much as common profane swearing? But why *above all things* is swearing here forbidden? because it strikes most directly at the honour of God, and most expressly throws contempt upon his name and authority; because this sin has, of all

others, the least temptation to it; it is neither gain, nor pleasure, nor reputation, that can move men to it, but a wantonness in sinning, and a needless shewing an enmity to God: *Thine enemies take thy name in vain*, Psalm cxxxix. 20. This is a proof of men being enemies to God, however they may pretend to call themselves by his name, or sometimes to compliment him in acts of worship. Because it is a sin that is most hardly left off when once men are accustomed to it, therefore it should above all others be watched against. And once more, *above all things swear not*; for how can you expect the name of God should be a strong tower to you in your distress, if you profane it, and play with it at other times?

But (as Mr. Baxter observes) "all this is so far from forbidding necessary oaths, that it is but to confirm them, by preserving the due reverence of them." And then he farther notes, "That the true nature of an oath, is, by our speech, to pawn the reputation of some certain or great thing, for the averring of a doubted lesser thing; and not (as is commonly held) an appeal to God, or other judge." Hence it was that swearing by the heavens, and by the earth, and by the other oaths the apostle refers to, came to be in use. The Jews thought, if they did but admit the great oath of *Chi Eloah*, they were safe. But they grew so profane as to swear by the creature, as if it was God; and so advanced it into the place of God: While, on the other hand, they that swear commonly and profanely by the name of God, do hereby put him upon the level with every common thing.

But let your yea, be yea; and your nay, nay; lest you fall into condemnation. That is, let it suffice you to affirm, or deny a thing as there is occasion; and be sure to stand to your word, and be true to it, so as to give no occasion for your being suspected of falshood; and then you will be kept from the condemnation, of backing what you say or promise, by rash oaths, and from profaning the name of God, to justify your selves. It is being suspected of falshood that leads men to swearing: Let it be known that you keep to truth, and are firm to your word, and by this means you will find there is no need to swear to what you say. Thus shall you escape the condemnation which is expressly annexed to the *third commandment*. *The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain*.

II. As Christians, we are taught to *suit our selves to the dispensations of providence*, *ver. 13. Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms*. Our condition in this world is various; and our wisdom is to submit to its being so, and to carry it as becomes us, both in prosperity, and under affliction. Sometimes we are in sadness, sometimes in mirth; God has set these one over against the other, that we may the better observe the several duties he enjoins; and that the impressions made on our passions and affections may be rendered serviceable to our devotions. Afflictions should put us upon prayer; and prosperity should make us abound in praise. Not that prayer is to be confined to a time of trouble, or singing to a time of mirth; but these several duties may be performed with special advantage, and to the happiest purposes at such seasons.

1. In a day of affliction nothing more seasonable than prayer. The person afflicted must pray himself, as well as engage the prayers of others for him. Times of affliction should be praying times. To this end God sends afflictions, that we may be engaged to seek him early; and that those, who at other times have neglected him, may be brought to enquire after him. The spirit is then most humble, the heart is broken and tender; and prayer is most acceptable to God when it comes from a contrite, humble spirit. Afflictions naturally draw out complaints, and to whom should we complain but to God in prayer? It is necessary to exercise faith and hope under afflictions; and prayer is the appointed means both for obtaining and encreasing these graces in us. *Is any afflicted? let him pray*.

2. In a day of mirth and prosperity, singing psalms is very proper and seasonable. In the original it is only said, sing; *ᾄδτε*, without the addition of psalms, or any other word: And we learn from the writings of several in the first ages of Christianity (particularly from a letter of Pliny's, and from some passages in Justin Martyr and Tertullian) that the Christians were used to sing hymns, either taken out of scripture, or of more private composition, in their worship of God. Though some have thought, that St. Paul's advising both the Colossians and Ephesians to *speaking to one another psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs*, means only the compositions of scripture; the psalms of David being distinguished in the Hebrew, by (*Shurim, Tehillim, and Mizmorim*) words that exactly answer these of the apostle. Let that be as it will, this however we are sure of, that singing psalms is a gospel ordinance: And that our joy should be holy joy, consecrated to God. Singing is so directed to here, as to shew that if any be in circumstances of mirth and prosperity, he should turn his mirth, though alone, and by himself, into this chanel. Holy mirth becomes families, and retirements, as well as publick assemblies. Let our singing be such as to make melody with our hearts unto the Lord, and no doubt but God will be well pleased with this kind of devotion.

III. We have particular directions given as to sick persons; and healing, pardoning mercy promised, upon the observance of those directions. *ver. 14, 15. If any be sick they are required, 1. To send for the elders, πρεσβύτεροι ἐκκλησίας, the presbyters, pastors or ministers of the church*. It lies upon sick people as a duty, to send for ministers, and to desire their assistance and their prayers. 2. It

is the duty of ministers to pray over the sick, when thus desired and called for. *Let them pray over him*; let their prayers be suited to his case, and their intercessions be as becomes those that are affected with his calamities. 3. In the times of miraculous healing, the *sick was to be anointed with oil in the name of the Lord*. Expositors generally confine this *anointing with oil* to such as had the power of working miracles; and, when miracles ceased, this institution ceased also. In St. Mark's gospel we read of the *apostles anointing with oil many that were sick, and healing them*, Mark vi. 13. And we have accounts of this being practised in the church, two hundred years after Christ; but then, the gift of healing also accompanied it. And when that miraculous gift ceased, this rite was laid aside. The papists indeed have made a sacrament of this, which they call the extreme unction. They use it not to heal the sick, as it was used by the apostles; but, as they generally run counter to scripture, in the appointments of their church; so here they ordain, that this should be only administered to such as are at the very point of death. The apostle's anointing was in order to heal the disease; the popish anointing is, for the expulsion of the relics of sin, and to enable the soul (as they pretend) the better to combat with the powers of the air. When they cannot prove, by any visible effects, that Christ owns them in the continuance of this rite, they would however have people to believe that the invisible effects are very wonderful: But it is surely much better to omit this *anointing with oil*, than to turn it quite contrary to the purposes spoken of in scripture. Some protestants have thought that this anointing was only permitted or approved by Christ, not instituted. But it should seem by the words of St. James here, that it was a thing enjoined in cases where there was faith for healing. And some protestants have urged for it, with this view. It was not to be commonly used, not even in the apostolical age; and some have thought that it should not be wholly laid aside in any age: But where there are extraordinary measures of faith in the person anointing, and in those that are anointed, there may an extraordinary blessing attend the observance of this direction for the sick. However that be, there is one thing carefully to be observed here, that the saving of the sick is not ascribed to the *anointing with oil*, but to prayer, *ver. 15. The prayer of faith shall save the sick, &c.* So that, 4. *Prayer over the sick must proceed from, and be accompanied with a lively faith.* There must be faith both in the person praying, and the person prayed for. In a time of sickness, it is not the cold and formal prayer that is effectual, but the prayer of faith. 5. *We should observe the success of prayer. The Lord shall raise up*, that is, if he be a person capable and fit for deliverance, and if God has any thing farther for such a person to do in the world. *And if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.* That is, where sickness is sent as a punishment for some particular sin, that sin shall be pardoned; and in token thereof, the sickness shall be removed. As when Christ said to the impotent man, *Go, and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee*, it is intimated that some particular sin was the cause of his sickness. The great thing therefore we should beg of God for our selves and others in the time of sickness, is, the pardon of sin. Sin is both the root of sickness, and the sting of it. If sin be pardoned, either affliction shall be removed in mercy, or we shall see there is mercy in the continuance of it. When heaven is founded upon pardon, we may say as Hezekiah did; thou hast, in love to my soul, *delivered it from the pit of corruption*, Isa. xxxviii. 17. When you are sick, and in pain, it is most common to pray and cry, *O give me ease! O restore me to health!* But your prayer should rather and chiefly be, *O that God would pardon my sins!*

IV. Christians are directed to *confess their faults one to another, and so to join in their prayers with, and for one another*, *ver. 16.* Some expositors connect this *ver. 16.* with *ver. 14.* As if when sick people send for ministers to *pray over them*, they should then *confess their faults* to them. Indeed, where any are conscious that their sickness is a vindictive punishment of some particular sin, and they cannot look for the removal of their sickness without particular applications to God for the pardon of such a sin, there it may be proper to acknowledge and tell his case, that those who pray over him may know how to plead rightly for him: But the confession here required, is, that of *Christians one to another*; and not, as the papists would have it, to a priest. Where persons have injured one another, acts of injustice must be confessed to *those against whom they have been committed*. Where persons have tempted one another to sin, or have consented in the same evil actions, there they ought mutually to blame themselves, and excite each other to repentance. Where crimes are of a publick nature, and have done any publick mischief, there they ought to be more publickly confessed, so as may best reach to all that are concerned. And sometimes it may be well to confess our faults to some prudent minister, or praying friend, that they may help us to plead with God for mercy and pardon. But then we are not to think St. James puts us upon telling every thing that we are conscious is amiss in our selves, or in our another: But so far as confession is necessary to our reconciliation with such as are at variance with us, or for reparation of wrongs done to any, or for the gaining information in any point of conscience, and making our own spirits quiet and easy; so far we should be ready to confess our faults. And sometimes also it may be of good use to Christians to disclose their peculiar weaknesses and infirmities to one another, where there are great intimacies and friend-

ships; and where they may help each other by their prayers to obtain pardon of their sins, and power against them. Those who make confession of their faults one to another, should thereupon pray with, and for one another; *ver. 13.* directs persons to pray for themselves: *Is any afflicted let him pray*: *ver. 14.* directs to seek for the prayers of ministers; and *ver. 16.* directs private Christians to pray one for another; so that here we have all sorts of prayer (ministerial, social, and secret) directed to.

V. The great advantage and efficacy of prayer is declared and proved. *The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*, whether he pray for himself, or for others: Witness the example of Elias, *ver. 17, 18.* He that prays must be a righteous man, not righteous in an absolute sense; for this Elias was not, who is here made a pattern to us; but righteous in a gospel sense; not loving or approving of any known iniquity. *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer*, Psalm lxxvi. 18. Farther, the prayer itself must be a fervent, in-wrought, well-wrought prayer. It must be a pouring out the heart to God; and it must proceed from a faith unfeigned. Such prayer avails much. It is of great advantage to our selves, it may be very beneficial to our friends, and we are assured of its being acceptable to God. It is good having those for friends, whose prayers are available in the sight of God.

The power of prayer is here proved from the success of Elijah. And this may be encouraging to us even in common cases, if we consider that Elijah was a man of like passions with us. He was a zealous good man, and a very great man, but he had his infirmities, and was subject to disorder in his passions, as well as others. In prayer we must not look to the merit of man, but to the grace of God. Only in this we should copy after Elijah, that he prayed earnestly, or, as it is in the original, *in prayer he prayed*. It is not enough to say a prayer, but we must pray in prayer. Our thoughts must be fixed, our desires firm and ardent, and our graces in exercise; and when we thus pray in prayer, we shall speed in prayer. *Elijah prayed that it might not rain*: And God heard him in his pleading against an idolatrous persecuting country, so that *it rained not on the earth, by the space of three years and six months*: *Again he prayed, and the heaven gave rain, &c.* Thus you see prayer is the key which opens and shuts heaven. To this there is an allusion, *Rev. xi. 6.* where the two witnesses are said to *have power to shut heaven, that it rain not*. This instance of the extraordinary efficacy of prayer is recorded for encouragement even to ordinary Christians to be instant and earnest in prayer. God never says to any of the seed of Jacob, *seek my face in vain*. If Elijah by prayer could do such great and wonderful things, surely the prayers of no righteous man shall return void. Where they may not be so much of miracles in God's answering our prayers, yet there may be as much of grace.

VI. This epistle concludes with an exhortation, to do *all we can in our places, to further and promote the conversion and salvation of others*, *ver. 19, 20.* Some interpret these verses as an apology which the apostle is making for himself, that he should so plainly and sharply reprove the Jewish Christians for their many faults and errors. And certainly St. James gives a very good reason, why he was so much concerned to reclaim them from their error; because in thus doing, he should save souls, and *hide a multitude of sins*. But we are not to restrain this place to the apostles converting such as erred from the truth; no, nor to other ministerial endeavours of the like nature; since it is said, if any err, and one convert him, let him be who he will, that does so good an office for another, he is therein an instrument of *saving a soul from death*. Those whom the apostle here calls brethren, he yet supposes liable to err. It is no mark of a wise or holy man, to boast of his being free from error, or to refuse to acknowledge when he is in an error. But if any do err, be they never so great, you must not be afraid to shew them their error; and be they never so weak and little, you must not disdain to make them wiser and better. If they err from the truth that is, from the gospel, the great rule and standard of truth, whether it be in opinion or practice, you must endeavour to bring them again to the rule. Errors in judgment and in life generally go together. There is some doctrinal mistake at the bottom of every practical miscarriage. There is none habitually bad, but it is upon some bad principle. Now to convert such is to reduce them from their error, and to reclaim them from the evils they have been led into. We are not presently to accuse and exclaim against an erring brother, and seek to bring reproach and calamities upon him but to convert him: And if by all our endeavours we cannot do this, yet we are no where empowered to persecute and destroy him. If we are instrumental in the conversion of any, we are said to convert them, though this be principally and efficiently the work of God. And if we can do no more towards the conversion of sinners, yet we may do this; pray for the grace and Spirit of God to convert and change them. And let those, that are any way serviceable to convert others, know what will be the happy consequences of their doing this: They may take great comfort in it at present, and they will meet with a crown at last.

He that is said to err from the truth in *ver. 19.* is described as erring in his way in *ver. 20.* and we cannot be said to convert any, merely by altering their opinions, unless we can bring them to correct and amend their ways. This is conversion, to turn a sinner from

from the error of his ways, and not to turn him from one party to another, or merely from one notion and way of thinking to another. He that thus converteth a sinner from the error of his way, *shall save a soul from death*. There is a soul in the case, and what is done towards the salvation of that, shall certainly turn to good account. The soul being the principal part of the man, the saving of that only is mentioned, but it concludes the salvation of the whole man: the spirit shall be saved from hell, and the body raised from the grave, and both saved from eternal death. And then, by such conversion of heart and life, a *multitude of sins shall be hid*. A most comfortable passage of scripture, this is. We learn from hence, that though our sins are many, even a multitude, yet they may be hid or pardoned. That when sin is turned from or forsaken, it shall be hid, never to appear in judgment against us: And let peo-

ple contrive to cover or excuse their sin as they will, there is no way effectually and finally to hide it, but forsaking it. Some make the sense of this text to be, that conversion shall prevent a multitude of sins; and that is a truth beyond dispute, that many sins are prevented in the party converted; many also may be prevented in others that he may have an influence upon, or may converse with. Upon the whole, how should we lay out our selves with all possible concern for the conversion of sinners. It will be for the happiness and salvation of the converted; it will prevent much mischief, and the spreading and multiplying of sin in the world; it will be for the glory and honour of God; and it will mightily redound to our comfort and renown in the great day. *They that turn many to righteousness, and they that help to do so, shall shine as the stars for ever and ever.*

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A N

# E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

## First Epistle General of P E T E R,

### With Practical Observations.

*Two epistles we have enroll'd in the sacred canon of the scripture, written by Peter, who was a most eminent apostle of Jesus Christ, and whose character shines bright, as it is described in the four gospels, and in the acts of the apostles; but as it is painted by the papists and legendary writers, it represents a person of extravagant pride and ambition.*

*It is certain from scripture, that Simon Peter was one of the first of those whom our Lord called to be his disciples and followers. That he was a person of excellent endowments, both natural and gracious, of great parts, and ready locution, quick to apprehend, and bold to execute whatever he knew to be his duty. When our Saviour called his apostles and gave them their commission, he nominated him first in the list, and by his behaviour towards him seems to distinguish him as a special favourite among the twelve. Many instances of our Lord's affection to him, both during his life, and after his resurrection, are upon record.*

*But there are many things confidently affirmed of this holy man that are directly false: as, That he had a primacy and superior power over the rest of the apostles; that he was more than their equal; that he was their prince, monarch, and sovereign; and that he exercised a jurisdiction over the whole college of the apostles: Moreover, That he was the sole universal pastor over all the Christian world, the only vicar of Christ upon earth; and that he was for above twenty years bishop of Rome, and that the Popes of Rome succeed to St. Peter, and derive from him an universal supremacy and jurisdiction over all churches and Christians upon earth; and that all this was by our Lord's ordering and appointment. Whereas Christ never gave him any prebeminence of this kind, but positively forbade it, and gave precepts to the contrary. The other apostles never consented to any such claim; Paul declares himself not a whit behind the very chiefest of the apostles, 2 Cor. xi. 5. and chap. xii. 11. In nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles. Here is no exception of St. Peter's superior dignity whom St. Paul took the freedom to blame, and withstood him to the face, Gal. ii. 11. And Peter himself never assumed any thing like it, but modestly stiles himself an apostle of Jesus Christ; and when he writes to the presbyters of the church, he humbly placeth himself in the same rank with them: The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, chap. v. 1. See Dr. Barrow on the Pope's supremacy.*

*The design of this first epistle is, 1. To explain more fully the doctrines of Christianity to these newly converted Jews. 2. To direct and persuade them to an holy conversation, in the faithful discharge of all personal and relative duties, whereby they would secure their own peace, and effectually confute the slanders and reproaches of their enemies. 3. To prepare them for sufferings: This seems to be his principal intention; for he hath something to this purpose in every chapter, and doth, by a great variety of arguments, encourage them to patience and perseverance in the faith, lest the persecutions and sad calamities that were coming upon them should prevail with them to apostatize from Christ and the gospel.*

*It is remarkable that you find not so much as one word favouring of the spirit and pride of a pope in either of these epistles.*

#### C H A P. I.

*In which the apostle describes the persons to whom he writes, and salutes them, ver. 1, 2. blesteth God for their regeneration to a lively hope of eternal salvation, ver. 3,—5. In the hopes of which salvation he shews they had great cause of rejoicing, though for a little while they were in heaviness and affliction for the trial of their faith, which would produce joy unspeakable and full of glory, ver. 6,—9. This is that salvation which the ancient prophets foretold, and the angels desire to look into, ver. 10,—12. He exhorteth them to sobriety and holiness, which he presseth from the consideration of the*

*blood of Jesus the invaluable price of man's redemption, ver. 13,—20. And to brotherly love, from the consideration of their regeneration, and the excellency of their spiritual state, ver. 22,—25.*

1. **P**ETER an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.



In this inscription we have three parts. 1. The author of it described. 1. By his name Peter. His first name was Simon, and Jesus Christ gave him the surname of Peter, which signifies a rock, as a commendation of his faith, and to denote that he should be an eminent pillar in the church of God, *Gal. ii. 9.* 2. By his office an apostle of Jesus Christ. The word signifies one sent, a legate, a messenger, any one sent in Christ's name, and about his work; but more strictly it signifies the highest office in the Christian church, *1 Cor. xii. 28.* God hath set some in the church, first apostles. Their dignity and preeminence lay in these things. They were immediately chosen by Christ himself; they were first witnesses, then preachers of the resurrection of Christ, and so of the entire gospel dispensation; their gifts were excellent and extraordinary; they had a power of working miracles, not at all times, but when Christ pleased; they were led into all truth, and were endowed with the spirit of prophecy, and they had an extent of power and jurisdiction beyond all others; every apostle was an universal bishop in all churches, and over all ministers. In this humble manner Peter does, 1. Assert his own character as an apostle. Hence learn, that a man may lawfully acknowledge, and sometimes is bound to assert the gifts and graces of God to him. To pretend to what we have not is hypocrisy; and to deny what we have is ingratitude. 2. He mentions his apostolical function as his warrant and call to write this epistle to these people. Learn, it concerns all, but especially ministers, to consider well their warrant and call from God to their work. This will justify them to others, and give them inward support and comfort under all dangers and discouragements.

2. We have here the persons to whom this epistle was addressed, and they are described, 1. By their external condition. Strangers dispersed throughout Pontus, Galatia, &c. They were chiefly Jews, descended (as Dr. Prideaux thinks) from those Jews that were transplanted from Babylon, by order of Antiochus king of Syria, about two hundred years before the coming of Christ, and placed in the cities of lesser Asia. It is very likely that our apostle had been among them, and converted them, being the apostle of the circumcision, and afterwards writes this epistle to them from Babylon, where multitudes of the Jewish nation then resided. At present their circumstances were poor and afflicted. Learn, 1. The best of God's servants may through the hardships of times and providences be dispersed about, and forced to leave their native countries. Those of whom the world was not worthy, have been forced to wander in mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. 2. We ought to have a special regard to the dispersed persecuted servants of God. These were the objects of this apostle's particular care and compassion: We should proportion our regard to the excellency and to the necessity of the saints. 3. The value of good people ought not to be estimated by their external present condition. Here were a set of excellent people, beloved of God, and yet strangers, dispersed and poor in the world; the eye of God was upon them in all their dispersions, and the apostle was tenderly careful to write to them for their direction and consolation.

2. They are described by their spiritual condition: *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, &c.* These poor strangers that were oppressed and despised in the world, were nevertheless in high esteem with the great God, and in the most honourable state that any person can be in during this life; for they were,

1. *Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father:* Election is either to an office, and so Saul was the man whom the Lord chose to be king, *1 Sam. x. 24.* And our Lord tells his apostles, *have not I chosen you twelve?* *John vi. 70.* Or to a church state, for the enjoyment of special privileges. And thus Israel was God's elect, *Deut. vii. 6.* *For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth.* Or to eternal salvation. God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. This is the election here spoken of, importing God's gracious decree or resolution to save some and bring them, through Christ, by proper means, to eternal life.

This election is said to be according to the foreknowledge of God. Foreknowledge may be taken two ways. 1. For meer prescience, foresight, or understanding; that such a thing will be before it comes to pass. Thus a mathematician certainly foreknows that such a time there will be an eclipse. This sort of foreknowledge is in God, who at one commanding views sees all things that ever were, or are, or ever will be. But such a prescience is not the cause why any thing is so or so, though in the event it certainly will be so, as the mathematician that foresees an eclipse, does not thereby cause that eclipse to be. 2. Foreknowledge sometimes signifieth counsel, appointment and approbations, *Acts ii. 23.* *Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.* The death of Christ was not only foreseen but foreordained, as *ver. 20.* Take it thus here, so the sense is elect according to the counsel, ordination and free grace of God.

It is added according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. By the Father we are here to understand the first person of the blessed Trinity. There is an order among the three persons, though no superiority; they are equal in power and glory, and there is an agreed œconomy in their works. Thus in the affair of man's redemption election is by way of eminency ascribed to the Father, as reconcilia-

tion is to the Son, and sanctification to the holy Ghost; though in each of these one person is not so entirely interested, as to exclude the other two. Hereby the persons of the Trinity are more clearly discovered to us, and we are taught what obligations we are under to each of them distinctly.

2. They were elect *through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.* The end and last result of election is eternal life and salvation; but before that can be accomplished, every elect person must be sanctified by the Spirit, and justified by the blood of Jesus. God's decree for man's salvation always operates through sanctification of the Spirit, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.

By sanctification here understand not a federal sanctification only, but a real one, begun in regeneration, whereby we are renewed after the image of God, and become new creatures, and carried on in the daily exercise of holiness, mortifying our sins more and more, and living to God in all the duties of a Christian life, which is here summed up in one word, obedience, comprehending all the duties of Christianity.

By the Spirit some would have the apostle to mean the spirit of man, the subject sanctified. The legal or typical sanctification did operate no farther than the *purifying of the flesh*, but the Christian dispensation takes effect upon the spirit of man, and purifies that. Others, with better reason, think that by Spirit is meant the holy Ghost, the author of sanctification. He renews the mind, mortifies our sins, *Rom. viii. 13.* and produces his excellent fruits in the hearts of Christians, *Gal. v. 22, 23.* This sanctification of the Spirit implies the use of means; *sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth*, *John xvii. 17.*

*Unto obedience:* This word, as it is pointed in our translation, is referred to what goes before it, and denotes the end of sanctification, which is to bring rebellious sinners to obedience again, to universal obedience, to obey the truth and gospel of Christ, *ver. 22.* *You have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.*

2. They were elected to the *sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.* They were designed by God's decree to be sanctified by the Spirit, and to be purified by the merit and blood of Christ. Here is a manifest allusion to the typical sprinklings of blood under the law, which language these Jewish converts understood very well. The blood of the sacrifices must not only be shed, but sprinkled, to denote the benefits designed thereby are applied and imputed to the offerers. Thus the blood of Christ the grand and all-sufficient sacrifice, typified by the legal sacrifices, was not only shed, but must be sprinkled and communicated to every one of these elect Christians, *that through faith in his blood they may obtain remission of sins*, *Rom. iii. 25.* This blood of sprinkling justifies before God, *Rom. v. 9.* seals the covenant between God and us, of which the Lord's supper is a sign, *Luke xxii. 20.* cleanseth from all sin, *1 John i. 7.* and admits us into heaven, *Heb. x. 19.*

Note, 1. That God hath elected some to eternal life, some, not all; persons, not qualifications. 2. All that are chosen to eternal life as the end, are chosen to obedience as the way. 3. Unless a person be sanctified by the Spirit, and sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, there will be no true obedience in the life. 4. There is a consent and cooperation of all the persons of the Trinity in the affair of man's salvation, and their acts are commensurate one to another; whoever the Father does elect, the Spirit does sanctify unto obedience, and the Son does redeem and sprinkle with his blood. 5. The doctrine of the Trinity does lie at the foundation of all revealed religion. If you deny the proper deity of the Son and holy Spirit, you invalidate the redemption of the one, and the gracious operations of the other, and by that means destroy the foundation of your own safety and comfort.

3. The salutation follows, *Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.* The blessings desired for them are *grace and peace.*

1. *Grace;* the free favour of God, with all its proper effects, pardoning, healing, assisting, and saving. 2. *Peace;* all sorts of peace may be here intended, domestick, civil, ecclesiastical peace in the church, and spiritual peace with God, and the feeling of it in our own consciences.

2. Here is the request of prayer, in relation to these blessings, that they may be multiplied; which implies, that they were already possessed in some degree of these blessings, and he wishes them the continuation, the increase, and the perfection of them. Learn,

1. They that possess spiritual blessings in their own souls, do earnestly desire the communication of the same to others; the grace of God is a generous, not a selfish principle.

2. The best blessings we can desire for ourselves, or one for another, are *grace and peace*, with the multiplication of them; therefore the apostles so often make this their prayer in the beginning and end of their epistles.

3. Solid peace cannot be enjoyed where there is no true grace; first grace, then peace: Peace without grace is meer stupidity; but grace may be true, where there is for a time no actual peace; as Heman was distracted with terror, and Christ was once in an agony.

4. The increase of *grace and peace*, as well as the first gift of them, is from God; where he giveth true grace, he will give more grace; and every good man does earnestly desire the improvement and multiplication of these blessings in himself, and others.

3. Blessed



3. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

We come now to the body of the epistle, which begins with a congratulation of the dignity and happiness of the state of these believers, brought in under the form of a thanksgiving to God: Other epistles begin in like manner, 2 Cor. i. 3. Eph. i. 3. Here we have, 1. The duty performed, which is  *blessing God*: A man blesteth God by a just acknowledgment of his excellency and blessedness. 2. Here is the object of this blessing described by his relation to Jesus Christ; *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*: Here are three names of one person, denoting his threefold office: (1.) He is  *Lord*, an universal king, or sovereign: (2.)  *Jesus*, a priest, or saviour: (3.)  *Christ*, a prophet, anointed with the Spirit, and furnished with all gifts necessary for the instruction, conduct, and salvation of his church: This  *God*, so  *blessed*, is  *the God of Christ*, according to his human nature, and his  *Father*, according to his divine nature.

3. You have the reasons that oblige us to this duty of  *blessing God*, which are in general,  *his abundant mercy*; all our blessings are owing to God's  *mercy*, not to man's merit, particularly regeneration; he  *hath begotten us again*, and this deserves our thanksgiving to God, especially if we consider the fruit it produceth in us, which is that excellent grace of  *hope*, and that not such a vain, dead, perishing  *hope* as that of worldlings and hypocrites, but a  *lively hope*, a living, strong, quickening, and durable  *hope*, as that  *hope* must needs be that hath such a solid foundation as  *the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*. Learn,

1. That a good Christian's condition is never so bad but he hath great reason still to bless God: As a sinner hath always reason to mourn, notwithstanding his present prosperity; so good people, in the midst of their manifold difficulties, have reason still to rejoice and bless God.

2. In our prayers and praises we should address to God as  *the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*; it is only through him that we and our services are accepted.

3. The best of men owe their best blessings to the  *abundant mercy* of God; all the evil in the world is from man's sin, but all the good in it is from  *God's mercy*; regeneration is expressly ascribed to the  *abundant mercy* of God, and so are all the rest; we subsist entirely upon divine mercy. Of the nature of regeneration, see  *John* iii. 3. in  *vol. iv*.

4. Regeneration produceth a  *lively hope* of eternal life; every unconverted person is a hopeless creature; whatever he pretends to of that kind, is all confidence and presumption; the right Christian  *hope* is what a man is  *begotten again unto* by the Spirit of God; it is not from nature, but free grace; they that are  *begotten* to a new and spiritual life, are  *begotten* to a new and spiritual  *hope*.

5. The  *hope* of a Christian hath this excellency, it is a  *living hope*; the  *hope* of eternal life in a true Christian, is an  *hope* that keeps him alive, quickens him, supports him, and conducts him to heaven:  *Hope* invigorates and spirits up the soul to action, to patience, to fortitude, and perseverance to the end: The delusive  *hopes* of the unregenerate are vain and perishing; the hypocrite and his  *hope* expire and die both together,  *Job* xxvii. 8.

6.  *The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*, is the ground or foundation of a Christian's  *hope*;  *the resurrection of Christ* is the act of the Father as a judge, of the Son as a conqueror; his  *resurrection* demonstrates that the Father accepts his death in full discharge for our ransom, that he is victorious over death, the grave, and all our spiritual enemies; and it is also an assurance of our own  *resurrection*, there being an inseparable union between Christ and his flock; they rise by virtue of his  *resurrection* as an head, rather than by virtue of his power as a judge:  *We are risen with Christ*, Col. iii. 1. From all this taken together, Christians have two fast solid foundations whereon to build their  *hope* of eternal life.

4. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

The apostle continues his thanksgiving to God, and, having congratulated these people on their new birth, and their hope of everlasting life, he goes on to describe that life under the notion of an  *inheritance*; a most proper way of speaking to these people; for,

1. They were poor and persecuted, perhaps, turned out of their  *inheritances* to which they were born; to allay this grievance, he tells them they were new-born to a new  *inheritance*, infinitely better than what they had lost.

2. They were Jews most of them, and so had a mighty affection to the land of Canaan, as the land of their  *inheritance*, settled upon them by God himself, and to be driven out from abiding in the  *inheritance of the Lord*, was looked upon as a sore judgment, 1 Sam. xxvi. 19. to comfort them under this, they are put in mind of a noble  *inheritance reserved in heaven for them*, such an one as the land of Canaan was but a meer shadow in comparison of it.

Note, 1. That  *heaven* is the undoubted  *inheritance* of all the children of God, all that are born again, are born  *to an inheritance*; as man makes his child his heir; the apostle argues,  *if children, then heirs*, Rom. viii. 17. God giveth his gifts unto all, but the  *inheri-*

*tance* to none but his children; those that are his sons and daughters by regeneration and adoption, receive the promise of eternal  *inheritance*, Heb. ix. 15. This  *inheritance* is not our purchase, but our Father's gift; not wages that we merit, but the effect of grace, which first makes us children, and then settles this  *inheritance* upon us by a firm, unalterable covenant.

Note, 2. The incomparable excellencies of this  *inheritance*, which are four.

1. It is  *incorruptible*, in which respect it is like its maker, who is called  *the incorruptible God*, Rom. i. 23. all corruption is a change from better to worse, but  *heaven* is without change, and without end; the house is  *eternal in the heavens*, and the possessors must subsist for ever;  *for their corruptible must put on incorruption*, 1 Cor. xv. 53.

2. This  *inheritance* is  *undefiled*, like the great High-priest that is now in possession of it, who is  *holy, harmless, and undefiled*, Heb. vii. 26. Sin and misery, the two grand defilements that spoil this world, and mar its beauty, have no place there.

3. It  *fadeth not away*, but always retains its vigour and beauty, and remains immarcescible, ever entertaining and pleasing the saints that possess it, without the least weariness or distaste.

4.  *Reserved in heaven for you*; which expression teaches us, 1. That is is a glorious  *inheritance*, for it is  *in heaven*, and all that is there is glorious, Eph. i. 18. 2. It is certain, a reversion in another world safely kept and preserved till we come to the possession of it. 3. The persons for whom it is  *reserved* are described, not by their names, but by character;  *for you*, or us, or every one that is  *begotten again to a lively hope*, this  *inheritance* is preserved for them, and none but them, all the rest will be shut out for ever.

5. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time.

This  *inheritance* being described as future, and distant both in time and place, the apostle supposeth some doubt or uneasiness yet to remain upon the minds of these people, whether they might not possibly fall short by the way; though the happiness be safe  *in heaven*, yet we are still upon earth, liable to abundance of temptations, miseries, and infirmities; are we in such safe state that we shall certainly come there? to this he answers, that they should be safely guarded and conducted thither; they should be kept and preserved from all such destructive temptations and injuries as would prevent their safe arrival at eternal life; the heir to an earthly estate hath no assurance that he shall live to enjoy it, but the heirs of heaven shall certainly be conducted safe to the possession of it; the blessing here promised is preservation,  *ye are kept*; the author of it,  *God*; the means in us made use of for that end, is our own  *faith* and care; the end to which we are preserved, is  *salvation*; and the time when we shall see the safe end and issue of all, is  *the last time*.

Note, 1. Such is the tender care of God over his people, that he not only gives them grace, but preserves them unto glory; their being  *kept*, implies both danger and deliverance; they may be attacked, but shall not be overcome.

2. The preservation of the regenerate to eternal life is the effect of  *God's power*; the greatness of the work, the number of enemies, and our own infirmities are such as no power, but what is almighty, can preserve the soul through all  *unto salvation*; therefore the scripture often represents man's salvation as the effect of divine power, 2 Cor. xii. 9. Rom. xiv. 4.

3. The preservation of  *God's power* does not supersede man's endeavour and care for his own salvation; here is  *God's power*, and man's  *faith*, which implies an earnest desire of salvation, a reliance upon Christ, according to his invitations and promises, a vigilant care to do every thing pleasing to God, and avoid whatever is offensive, an abhorrence of temptations, a  *respect to the recompence of reward*, and persevering diligence in prayer; by such a patient, operating, conquering  *faith*,  *we are kept*, under the assistance of divine grace,  *unto salvation*;  *faith* is a sovereign preservative of the soul through a state of grace unto a state of glory.

4. This  *salvation* is  *ready to be revealed in the last time*: Here are three things asserted about the salvation of the saints: 1. That it is now prepared, and  *made ready*, and  *reserved in heaven for them*. 2. Though it be  *made ready* now, yet it is in a great measure hidden and unrevealed at present, not only to the ignorant, blind world, that never enquire after it, but even to the heirs of salvation themselves:  *It does not yet appear what we shall be*, 1 John iii. 2. 3. That it shall be fully and completely  *revealed in the last time*, or at the last day of judgment:  *Life and immortality are now brought to light by the gospel*, but this life will be revealed more gloriously at death, when the soul shall be admitted into the presence of Christ, and behold his glory; and even beyond this there will be a farther and a final revelation of the amplitude and transcendency of the saints felicity at the last day, when their bodies shall be raised, and re-united to their souls, and judgment shall pass upon angels and men, and Christ shall publicly honour and applaud his servants in the face of all the world.

6. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season (if need be) ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations.



The first word, *wherein*, refers to the apostle's foregoing discourse about the excellency of their present state, and their grand expectations for the future; in this condition *you greatly rejoice, though now for a season*, or a little while, *if need be, ye are made sorrowful through manifold temptations*: The apostle grants they were in great affliction, and propounds several things in mitigation of their sorrows.

Note, 1. Every sound Christian hath always something *wherein* he may *greatly rejoice*; great rejoicing contains more than an inward placid serenity of mind, or sensation of comfort; it will shew itself in the countenance and carriage, but especially in praise and gratitude.

2. The chief joy of a good Christian ariseth from things spiritual and heavenly, from his relation to God, and to heaven; in these every sound Christian *greatly rejoiceth*; his joy ariseth from his treasure, which consists in matters of great value, and the title to them is sure.

3. The best Christians, those that have reason *greatly to rejoice*, may yet be in *great heaviness through manifold temptations*; all sorts of adversities are *temptations*, or trials of faith, patience, and constancy; these seldom go singly, but are *manifold*, and come from different quarters; the effect of all which is *great heaviness*: As men, we are subject to sorrows, personal, and domestick; and, as Christians, our duty to God obliges us to frequent sorrow; and our compassion towards the miserable, the dishonour done to God, the calamities of his church, and the destruction of mankind, from their own folly, and from divine vengeance, raises in a generous and pious mind, almost continual sorrow, *Rom. ix. 2. I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.*

4. The afflictions and sorrows of good people are but for a little while, they are but *for a season*; though they may be smart, they are but short; life itself is but for a little while, and the sorrows of it cannot survive it; the shortness of any affliction does much abate the heaviness of it.

5. Great heaviness is often necessary to a Christian's good; *if need be, ye are in heaviness*: God does not afflict his people willingly, but acts with judgment in proportion to our needs; there is a conveniency and fitness, nay, an absolute necessity in the case, for so the expression signifies, *it must be*; therefore *no man should be moved by these afflictions*; for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto, *1 Thess. iii. 3.* These troubles, that lie heavy, never come upon us but when we have need, and never stay any longer than needs must.

7. That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

These words express the end of good peoples afflictions, and the ground of their joy under them; the end of afflictions is *the trial of their faith*; the nature of this trial, it is *much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire*; the result and effect of the trial is this, it will *be found unto praise, honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.*

Note, 1. That the afflictions of serious Christians are designed for *the trial of their faith*; God's design in afflicting his people is, their probation, not their destruction; their advantage, not their ruin; a *trial*, as the word signifies, is any experiment or search made upon a man, by some affliction, to prove the value and strength of his faith; this *trial* is made upon *faith* principally, rather than any other grace, because *the trial of that is, in effect, the trial of all that is good in us*; our Christianity depends upon our *faith*, if that be wanting, there is nothing else that is spiritually good in us; Christ prays for this apostle, *that his faith might not fail*; if that be supported, all the rest will stand firm; the *faith* of good people is *tried*, that they themselves may have the comfort of it, God the glory of it, and others the benefit of it.

2. A *tried faith* is *much more precious than tried gold*; here is a double comparison of *faith* and *gold*, and *the trial of the one with the trial of the other*; *gold* is the most valuable, pure, useful, and durable of all the metals; so is *faith* among the Christian virtues; it lasts till it brings the soul to heaven, and then it issues into the glorious fruition of God for ever; *the trial of faith is much more precious than the trial of gold*; in both there is a purification, a separation of the dross, and a discovery of the soundness and goodness of the things; *gold* does not encrease and multiply by trial in the fire, it rather grows less; but *faith* is established, improved, and multiplied, by the oppositions and afflictions that it meets with; *gold* must perish at last; *gold that perisheth*; but *faith* never will; *I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not*, *Luke xxii. 32.*

3. *The trial of faith will be found to praise, and honour, and glory*: *Honour* is properly that esteem and value which one hath with another, and so God and man will honour the saints; *praise* is the expression or declaration of that esteem, so Christ will commend his people in the great day, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, &c.* *glory* is that lustre wherewith a person so honoured and praised shines in heaven; *glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good*, *Rom. ii. 10.* If a *tried faith* be found to praise, honour, and glory, let this recommend *faith* to you, as *much more precious than gold*, though it be assailed and tried by afflictions; if you make your citi-

mate either from present use, or the final event of both, it will be found true; however the world takes it for an incredible paradox.

4. That *Jesus Christ* will appear again in glory, and, when he does so, the saints will appear with him, and their graces will appear illustrious; and the more they have been *tried*, the more bright they will then appear; *the trial* will soon be over, but the *glory, honour, and praise*, will last to eternity: This should reconcile you to your present afflictions; *they work for you a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.*

8. Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory:

The faith of these primitive Christians is farther commended upon two accounts: 1. The excellency of its object, the unseen Jesus; the apostle had seen our Lord in the flesh, but these dispersed Jews never did, and yet they *believed* in him: It is one thing to believe God, or Christ, so the devils believe, another thing to believe in him; which denotes subjection, reliance, and expectation of all promised good from him. 2. On account of two notable productions, or effects of their faith, love, and joy; and this joy so great, as to be above description; *ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.*

Learn, 1. The faith of a Christian is properly conversant about things revealed, but not seen; sense converseth with things sensible and present, reason is an higher guide, and that, by sure deductions, can infer the operations of causes, and the certainty of events; but faith ascends farther still, and assures us of abundance of particulars, that sense and reason could never have found out, upon the credit of revelation; it is *the evidence of things not seen.*

2. True faith is never alone, but produceth a strong love to Jesus Christ; true Christians have a dear love to Jesus, because they believe in him; this love discovers itself in the highest esteem for him, affectionate desires after him, willingness to be dissolved to be with him, delightful thoughts, cheerful services, and sufferings, &c.

3. Where there is true faith and love to Christ, there is, or may be, *joy unspeakable, and full of glory*; this joy is inexpressible, it cannot be described by words; the best discovery is by an experimental taste of it; it is *full of glory*, full of heaven; there is much of heaven, and the future glory, in the present joys of improved Christians; their faith removes the causes of sorrow, and affords the best reasons for joy; though good people sometimes walk in darkness, it is often owing to their own mistakes and ignorance, or to a fearful, melancholy disposition, or to some late sinful miscarriage, or, perhaps, to some sad occurrence of providence, that sinks their comfort for the present, yet they have reason to *rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of their salvation*, *Hab. iii. 18.*

9. Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Well might these Christians *rejoice with joy unspeakable*, since they were every day *receiving the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls.*

Note, 1. The blessing they were *receiving, the salvation of souls*; the more noble part being put for the whole man; which *salvation* is here called *the end of their faith*; *the end* wherein *faith* terminates; it helps to save the soul, then it hath done its work, and ceaseth for ever.

Note, 2. He speaks of the present time, you are now actually *receiving the end of your faith, &c.*

Note, 3. The word used alludes to the games which the conquerors received, or bore away, from the judge of the contest, a crown, or reward, which he carried about in triumph; so *the salvation of the soul* was the prize these Christians sought for, the crown they laboured for, the end they aimed at, which came nearer, and more within their reach, every day.

Learn, 1. That every faithful Christian is daily *receiving the salvation of his soul*; *salvation* is one permanent thing, begun in this life, not interrupted by death, and continued to all eternity: These believers had the beginnings of heaven in the possession of holiness, and an heavenly mind, in their duties and communion with God, in the earnest of the inheritance, and the witness of the divine Spirit: This was properly urged to these distressed people, they were on the losing side in the world, the apostle puts them in mind of what they were *receiving*; if they lost an inferior good, they were all the while *receiving the salvation of their souls.*

2. It is lawful for a Christian to make *the salvation of his soul his end*; the glory of God, and our own felicity, are so connected, that if we regularly seek the one, we must attain the other.

10. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.

The apostle having described the persons to whom he wrote, and declared to them the excellent advantages they were under, he goes on to shew them what warrant he had for what he had delivered; and, because they were Jews, and had a mighty veneration for the Old Testament, he produceth the authority of the prophets to convince



vince them that the doctrine of *salvation by faith in Jesus Christ* was no new doctrine, but the same which the old prophets did *enquire, and search diligently into*.

Note, 1. Who made this diligent search; *the prophets*, who were persons inspired by God to the doing or saying things extraordinary, above the reach of their own studies and abilities, foretelling things to come, and revealing the will of God, by the direction of the holy Spirit.

2. The object of their search; which was *salvation, and the grace of God which should come unto you*; the general salvation of men of all nations by Jesus Christ, and more especially the *salvation* afforded to the Jew; *the grace that should come to them from him who was not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*: They foresaw glorious times of light, grace, and comfort, coming upon the church, which made *the prophets*, and righteous, desire to see and hear the things which came to pass in the days of the gospel.

3. The manner of their enquiry; they *enquired, and searched diligently*; the words are strong and emphatical, alluding to miners that dig to the bottom, and break through not only the earth, but the rock, to come to the oar; so these holy *prophets* had an earnest desire to know, and were proportionably diligent in their enquiries after the grace of God, which was to be revealed in the days of the Messiah; their being inspired did not make their industrious search needless, for, notwithstanding their extraordinary assistance from God, they were obliged to make use of all the ordinary methods of improvement in wisdom and knowledge: Daniel was a man greatly beloved, and inspired, yet he understood by books and study the computations of time, *chap. ix.* 2. Even their own revelation required their study, meditation, and prayer; for many prophecies had a double meaning; in their first intention they aimed at some person, or event, near at hand, but their ultimate design was to describe the person, sufferings, or kingdom of Christ.

Observe, 1. The doctrine of man's salvation by Jesus Christ, hath been the study and admiration of the greatest and wisest of men; the nobleness of the subject, and their own concern in it, have engaged them, with most accurate attention and seriousness, to search into it.

2. A good man is much affected and pleased with the grace and mercy of God to others, as well as to himself; *the prophets* were highly delighted with the prospects of mercy to be shewn both to Jews and Gentiles at the coming of Christ.

3. They that would be acquainted with this great *salvation*, and *the grace* that shines therein, must *enquire, and search diligently* into it: If it were necessary for an inspired *prophet* to do so, much more for persons so weak and injudicious as we are.

4. *The grace that came* by the gospel excels all that was before it; the gospel dispensation is more glorious, evident, intelligible, extensive, and effectual, than any dispensation that ever did precede it.

11. Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

The particular matters which the ancient prophets chiefly searched into are here expressed; Jesus Christ was the main subject of their studies, and, in relation to him, they were most inquisitive into, (1.) His humiliation and death, and the glorious consequences of it; *the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow*; this enquiry would lead them into a view of the whole gospel, the sum whereof is this, *that Christ Jesus was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification*. (2.) The time, and the manner of the times, wherein the Messiah was to appear; undoubtedly, these holy prophets earnestly desired to *see the days of the Son of man*; and therefore, next to the thing itself, their minds were set upon the time of its accomplishment, so far as *the Spirit of Christ, which was in them*, had signified any thing toward that purpose: The nature of the times were also under their strict consideration, whether they would be quiet, or troublesome times; times of peace, or times of war.

Learn, 1. Jesus Christ had a being, and did exist, before his incarnation; for his Spirit did then exist in the prophets, and therefore he whose that Spirit then was, must be in being also.

2. The doctrine of the Trinity was not wholly unknown to the faithful in the Old Testament; the prophets knew that they were inspired by a *Spirit that was in them*, this *Spirit* they knew to be *the Spirit of Christ*, and, consequently, distinct from Christ himself; here is a plurality of persons, and from other parts of the Old Testament a Trinity may be collected.

3. The works here ascribed to the holy Ghost prove him to be God; he *did signify, discover, and manifest*, to the prophets, many hundred years *beforehand, the sufferings of Christ*, with a multitude of particular circumstances attending them; and he did also *testify*, or give proof and evidence *beforehand*, of the certainty of that event, by inspiring the prophets to reveal it, to work miracles in confirmation of it, and by enabling the faithful to believe it; these works prove *the Spirit of Christ* to be God, since he is possessed of almighty power, and infinite knowledge.

4. From the example of Christ Jesus, learn to expect a time of services and sufferings before you are received to glory; it was so

with him, and *the disciple is not above his Lord*; the suffering time is but short, but the glory is everlasting; let the suffering season be never so sharp and severe, it shall not hinder, but *work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*.

12. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you, by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

These words contain an answer to the prophets enquiry; their holy endeavours to inform themselves were not slighted, for God gives them a satisfactory revelation to quiet and comfort their minds; they were informed that these things should not come to pass in their time, but yet all was firm and certain, and should come to pass in the times of the apostles; *not unto themselves, but to us*; and we must report them, under the infallible direction of *the holy Ghost*, to all the world; *which things the angels, &c.*

You have here three sorts of students, or enquirers, into the great affair of man's salvation by Jesus Christ: 1. *The prophets search diligently* into it. 2. *The apostles*, who consulted all the prophecies, and were witnesses of the accomplishment of them, and so reported what they knew to others in *the preaching of the gospel*. 3. *The angels*, who most attentively pry into these matters.

Learn, 1. A diligent endeavour after the knowledge of Christ, and our duty, will certainly be answered with good success: The prophets were answered with a revelation; Daniel studies, and receives information; the Bereans search the scriptures, and were confirmed.

2. The holiest and best of men sometimes have their lawful and pious requests denied: It was both lawful and pious for these prophets to desire to know more than they were permitted to know about the time of the appearance of Christ in the world, but they were denied: It is lawful and pious for good parents to pray for their wicked children, for the poor to pray against poverty, for a good man to pray against death, yet, in these honest requests, they often are denied: God is pleased to answer our necessities, rather than our requests.

3. It is the honour and practice of a Christian to be useful to others, in many cases, rather than to himself; these prophets ministered to others, *not unto themselves*; *none of us liveth to himself*, Rom. xiv. 7. Nothing more contrary to man's nature, and Christian principles, than for a man to make himself his own end, and live to himself.

4. The revelations of God to his church, though gradual, and given by parcels, are all perfectly consistent; the doctrine of the prophets, and of the apostles, do exactly agree, as coming from the same Spirit of God.

5. The efficacy of the evangelical ministry depends upon *the holy Ghost sent down from heaven*; the gospel is *the ministration of the Spirit*; the success of it depends upon his operation and blessing.

6. The mysteries of the gospel, and the methods of man's salvation are so glorious, that the blessed *angels* do earnestly desire to look into them; they are curious, accurate, and industrious in prying into them; they consider the whole scheme of man's redemption with deep attention and admiration, particularly these points the apostle had been discoursing of; *which things the angels desire to stoop down and look into, as the cherubims did continually towards the mercy-seat*.

13. Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Here the apostle begins his exhortation to them, whose glorious state he had before described, thereby instructing us, that Christianity is a doctrine according to godliness, designed not only to make us wiser, but better; *wherefore*, since you are so honoured and distinguished, as above,

*Gird up the loins of your mind*; you have a journey to go, a race to run, a warfare to accomplish, and a great work to do; as the traveller, the racer, the warrior, and the labourer gather in, and gird up their long and loose garments, that they may be more ready, prompt, and expeditious, in their business; so do you by *your minds*, your inner man, and affections seated there; *gird them*, gather them in, let them not hang loose and neglected about you; restrain their extravagancies, and let *the loins*, or strength, and vigour of *your minds* be exerted in your duty; disengage yourselves from all that would hinder you, and go on resolutely in your obedience.

*Be sober*, be vigilant, against all your spiritual dangers and enemies, and be temperate and modest in eating, drinking, apparel, recreation, business, and in the whole of your behaviour; *be sober-minded* also in opinion, as well as in practice, and humble in your judgment of yourselves.

*And hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*. Some refer this to the last judgment, as if the apostle did direct their hope to the final revelation of *Jesus Christ*; but it seems more natural to take it, as it might be rendered, *hope perfectly, or thoroughly, for the grace that is brought to you*



you in, or by, *the revelation of Jesus Christ*; that is, by *the gospel which brings life and immortality to light*; *hope perfectly*, trust without doubting, to that grace which is now offered to you by the gospel.

Learn, 1. The main work of a Christian lies in the right management of his heart and mind; the apostle's first direction is to *gird up the loins of the mind*.

2. The best Christians have need to be exhorted to sobriety; these excellent Christians are put in mind of it; it is required of a *bishop*, 1 Tim. iii. 2. of *aged men*, Tit. ii. 2. *the young women* are to be taught it, and *the young men* are directed to be *sober-minded*, Tit. ii. 4, 6.

3. A Christian's work is not over as soon as he is got into a state of grace; he must still hope and strive for more grace; when he hath *entered the strait gate*, he must still walk in *the narrow way*, and *gird up the loins of his mind* for that purpose.

4. A strong and perfect trust in God's grace is very consistent with our best endeavours in our duty; we must *hope perfectly*, and yet *gird up our loins*, and address ourselves vigorously to the work we have to do, encouraging ourselves from *the grace of Jesus Christ*.

14. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance:

The exhortation is continued, and the words may be taken, either as a rule of holy living, which is both positive, you ought to live *as obedient children*, as those whom God hath adopted into his family, and regenerated by his grace, and negative, you must *not fashion yourselves according to the former lusts, in your ignorance*, or the words may be taken as an argument to press them to holiness from the consideration of what they now are, *children of obedience*, and what they were when they lived in *lust and ignorance*.

Learn, 1. The children of God ought to prove themselves to be such by their obedience to God, by their present, constant, universal obedience.

2. The best of God's children have had their times of *lust and ignorance*; the time hath been when the whole scheme of their lives, their way, and fashion, was to accommodate and gratify their unlawful desires, and vicious appetites, being grossly ignorant of God, and themselves, of Christ, and the gospel.

3. Persons converted differ exceedingly from what they were formerly; they are people of another fashion and manner from what they were before; their inward frame, behaviour, speech, and conversation, is much altered from what it was in times past.

4. *The lusts* and extravagancies of sinners, are both the fruits and signs of *their ignorance*.

15. But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16. Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.

Here is a noble rule enforced by strong arguments, *Be ye holy in all manner of conversation*. Who is sufficient for this? and yet it is required in strong terms, and enforced by three reasons, taken from the grace of God, in *calling us*; from his command, *it is written*; and from his example, *Be ye holy, for I am holy*.

Learn, 1. The grace of God in calling a sinner is a powerful engagement to holiness; it is a mighty favour to be called effectually by divine grace out of a state of sin and misery, into the possession of all the blessings of the new covenant; and great favours are strong obligations; it does enable, as well as oblige to holiness.

2. Compleat holiness is the desire and duty of every Christian; here is a twofold rule of holiness; (1.) It must, for the extent of it, be universal, must *be holy*, and *be so in all manner of conversation*; in all civil and religious affairs, in every condition, prosperous or adverse, towards all people, friends or enemies; in all our intercourse and business still we must *be holy*. (2.) For the pattern of it, we must *be holy, as God is holy*; we must imitate him, though we can never equal him; he is perfectly, unchangeably, and eternally *holy*; and we should aspire after such a state: The consideration of the holiness of God should oblige us to the highest degrees of holiness we can attain unto.

3. The *written word* of God is the surest rule of a Christian's life, and by this rule we are commanded to *be holy* every way.

4. The Old Testament commands are to be studied and obeyed in the times of the New Testament; the apostle, by virtue of a command delivered several times by Moses, requires holiness in all Christians.

17. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

The apostle does not here express any doubt at all whether these Christians would *call upon their heavenly Father*, but supposes they would certainly do it, and from that argues with them to *pass the time of their sojourning here in fear*; if you own the great God as a *Father*, and a Judge, you ought to live *the time of your sojourning here in his fear*.

Learn, 1. All good Christians look upon themselves in this world as pilgrims, and sojourners, as strangers in a distant country, passing to another, to which they properly belong, *Psalms xxxix. 17. Heb. xi. 13*.

2. The whole time of our sojourning here is to be passed in the fear of God.

3. The consideration of God as a Judge, is not improper for those that can truly call him *Father*; holy confidence in God as a *Father*, and an awful fear of him as a Judge, are very consistent; to regard God as a Judge, is a singular means to endear him to us as a *Father*.

4. The judgment of God will be *without respect of persons*, according to every man's works; no external relation to him will protect any; the Jew may call God *Father*, and Abraham father, but God will not *respect persons*, or favour their cause from personal considerations, but judge them according to their work; the works of men will in the great day discover their persons; God will make all the world to know who are his by their works; we are obliged to faith, holiness, and obedience, and our works will be an evidence whether we have complied with our obligations or no.

18. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; 19. But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

The apostle having exhorted to *pass the time of our life in the fear of God*, from this consideration, that we call on the *Father*, he adds, in these words, a second argument, because, or, *forasmuch as we are redeemed by the Son*, &c. wherein he puts them in mind, 1. That they were redeemed, or bought back again, by a ransom paid to the Father. 2. What the price paid for their redemption was; *not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ*. 3. They knew this; *forasmuch as ye know*, and cannot pretend ignorance of this great affair. 4. From what they were redeemed; *from a vain conversation received by tradition*.

Learn, 1. That the consideration of our redemption ought to be a constant and powerful inducement to holiness, and the fear of God.

2. God expects that a Christian should live answerably to what he knows, and therefore we have great need to be put in mind of what we already know, *Psalms xxxix. 4*.

3. Neither *silver*, nor *gold*, nor any of the *corruptible things* of this world, can redeem so much as one soul; they are often snares, temptations, and hindrances to man's salvation, but they can by no means purchase or procure it; they are *corruptible*, and therefore cannot redeem an incorruptible and immortal soul.

4. *The blood of Jesus Christ* is the only price of man's redemption; the redemption of man is real, not metaphorical; *we are bought with a price*, and the price is equal to the purchase, for it is *the precious blood of Christ*, it is *the blood* of an innocent person, a lamb without blemish and without spot, whom the paschal lamb did represent, and of an infinite person, being the Son of God, and therefore is called *the blood of God*, Acts xx. 28.

5. The design of Christ in shedding his most precious blood was to redeem us, not only from eternal misery hereafter, but from a vain conversation in this world. That conversation is vain, that is empty, frivolous, trifling and unserviceable to the honour of God, the credit of religion, the conviction of unbelievers, and the comfort and satisfaction of a man's own conscience. Not only the open wickedness, but the vanity and unprofitableness of our conversation is highly dangerous.

6. It is possible a man's conversation may carry an appearance of devotion, and may plead antiquity, custom and tradition in its defence, and yet after all be a most vain conversation. The Jews had a deal to say from these heads, for all their formalities; and yet their conversation was so vain, that only the blood of Christ could redeem them from it. Antiquity is no certain rule of verity, nor is it a wise resolution, "I will live and die in such a way, because my forefathers did so."

20. Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you;

21. Who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.

The Redeemer is farther described, not only as a lamb without spot, but as one, 1. That was foreordained before the foundation of the world, foreordained or foreknown. When prescience is ascribed to God, it implies more than bare prospect or speculation. It does import an act of the will, a resolution that the thing shall be, Acts ii. 23. God did not only foreknow, but determine and decree that his Son should die for man, and this decree was *before the foundation of the world*. Time and the world began together; before the commencement of time there was nothing but eternity.

2. That he was manifest in these last days for you. He was manifested or demonstrated to be that Redeemer whom God had foreordained. He was manifest by his birth, by his Father's testimony, and



and by his own works, especially by his resurrection from the dead, *Rom. i. 4.* This was done in these last times of the New Testament and of the gospel, for you, you Jews, you sinners, you afflicted ones, you have the comfort of the manifestation and appearance of Christ, if you believe on him.

3. That God raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory. The resurrection of Christ, considered as an act of power, is common to all the three persons, but as an act of judgment it is peculiar to the Father, who as a judge released Christ, and raised him from the grave, and gave him glory, proclaimed him to all the world to be his Son by his resurrection from the dead, advanced him to heaven, crowned him with glory and honour, invested him with all power in heaven and earth, and glorified him with that glory which he had with God, before the world was.

The redeemed are also described here by their faith and hope. The cause of which is Jesus Christ; *you do by him believe in God.* By him as the author, encourager, support and finisher of your faith; your faith and hope now may be in God, as reconciled to you by Christ the mediator.

Learn, 1. The decree of God, to send Christ to be a mediator was from everlasting, and was a just and merciful decree, which yet does not at all excuse man's sin in crucifying him, *Acts ii. 23.* God hath purposes of special favours towards his people long before he makes any manifestation of such grace unto them.

2. Grace is the happiness of the last time in comparison with what the former ages of the world did enjoy. The clearness of light, the supports of faith, the efficacy of ordinances, and the proportion of comforts; these are all much larger since the manifestation of Christ than they were before. Our gratitude and services should be suitable to such favours.

3. The redemption of Christ belongs to none but true believers. A general impetration is asserted by some, and denied by others; but none pretend to a general application of Christ's death for the salvation of all. Hypocrites and unbelievers will be ruined for ever notwithstanding the death of Christ.

4. God in Christ is the ultimate object of a Christian's faith, which is strongly supported by the resurrection of Christ, and the glory that did follow.

22. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, unto unfeigned love in the brethren; *see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:*

Here the apostle begins another exhortation to brotherly love, wherein he supposeth that the gospel had already such an effect upon them, as to purify their souls, which they obeyed it through the Spirit, and that it had produced, at least, a *unfeigned love of the brethren*; and from thence he argues with them to proceed to an higher degree of affection, to love one another with a pure heart fervently.

Learn, 1. It is not to be doubted but that every sincere Christian purifies his soul. The apostle takes that for granted, *seeing ye have, &c.* To purify the soul supposeth some great uncleanness and defilement which hath polluted it, and that this defilement is removed. Neither the Levitical purifications under the law, nor the hypocritical purifications of the outward man can effect this.

2. The word of God is the great instrument of a sinners purification. *Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth.* The gospel is called truth in opposition to types and shadows, and to error and falsehood. This truth is effectual to purify the soul if it be obeyed, *John xvii. 17.* Many hear the truth, but are never purified by it; because they will not submit to it nor obey it.

3. The Spirit of God is the great agent in the purification of man's soul. The Spirit convinceth the soul of its impurities, furnishes those virtues and graces that do both adorn and purify, such as faith, *Acts xv. 9.* hope, *1 John. iii. 3.* the fear of God, *Psal. xiv. 9.* and the love of Jesus Christ. The Spirit excites our endeavours, and makes them successful. The aid of the Spirit does not supersede our own industry; these people purified their own souls, but it was through the Spirit.

4. The souls of Christians must be purified before they can so much as love one another unfeignedly. There are those lusts and partialities in man's nature, that without divine grace we can neither love God nor one another as we ought to do; there is no charity but out of a pure heart.

5. It is the duty of all Christians sincerely and fervently to love one another. Our affection to one another must be sincere and real, and it must be fervent, constant and extensive.

23. Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

This duty of loving one another with a pure heart fervently, the apostle does farther press upon Christians from the consideration of their spiritual relation, they are all *born again, not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, &c.* From whence we may learn,

1. That all Christians are born again. The apostle speaks of it as what is common to all serious Christians, and by this they are brought into a new and a near relation one to another, they become brethren by their new birth.

2. The word of God is the great means of regeneration, *Jam. i. 18.* The grace of regeneration is conveyed by the gospel.

3. This new and second birth is much more desirable and excellent than the first. This the apostle teaches by preferring the incorruptible to the corruptible seed. By the one we become the children of men, by the other the sons and daughters of the most High. The word of God being compared to seed, teaches us, that though it be little in appearance, yet it is wonderful in operation; though it lies hid a while, yet grows up and produceth excellent fruit at last.

4. Those that are regenerate should love one another with a pure heart fervently. Brethren by nature are bound to love one another; but the obligation is double where there is a spiritual relation; they are under the same government, partake of the same privileges, and are embarked in the same interest.

5. The word of God liveth and abideth for ever. This word is a living word, or a lively word, *Heb. iv. 12.* It is a means of spiritual life to begin it, and preserve in it, animating and exciting us in our duty, till it brings us to eternal life; and it is abiding; it remains eternally true, and abides in the hearts of the regenerate for ever.

24. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man, as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: 25. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

The apostle having given an account of the excellency of the renewed spiritual man as born again not of corruptible, but incorruptible seed, he now sets before us the vanity of the natural man, taking him with all his ornaments and advantages about him; *for all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man, as the flower of grass;* and nothing can make him a solid substantial being, but the being born again of the incorruptible seed, the word of God, which will transform him into a most excellent creature, whose glory will not fade like a flower, but shine like an angel; and this word is daily set before you in the preaching of the gospel.

Learn, 1. Man in his utmost flourish and glory is still a withering, fading, dying creature. Take him singly, all flesh is grass. In his entrance into the world, in his life, and in his fall, he is like to grass, *Job xiv. 2.* *Isa. xl. 6, 7.* Take him in all his glory, even that is as the flower of grass, his wit, beauty, strength, vigour, wealth, honour; these are but as the flower of grass, which soon withers and dies away.

2. The only way to render this perishing creature solid and incorruptible, is to entertain and receive the word of God, for that remains everlasting truth, and if received, will preserve him to everlasting life, and abide with him for ever.

3. The prophets and apostles preached the same doctrine. This word, which Isaiah and others delivered in the Old Testament, is the same which the apostles preached in the new.

## CHAP. II.

*The general exhortation to holiness is continued and enforced by several reasons taken from the foundation on which Christians are built, Jesus Christ, and from their spiritual blessings and privileges in him. The means of obtaining it, the word of God, is recommended, and all contrary qualities are condemned, ver. 1,—12. Particular directions are given how subjects ought to obey the magistrates, and servants their masters, patiently suffering in well doing, in imitation of Christ.*

1. **W**herefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil-speaking,

The holy apostle had been recommending mutual charity, and setting forth the excellencies of the word of God, calling it an incorruptible seed, and saying that it liveth and abideth for ever. He pursues his discourse, and very properly comes in with this necessary advice, *wherefore laying aside all malice, &c.* These are such sort of sins as do both destroy charity, and hinder the efficacy of the word, and consequently prevent our regeneration. His advice is to lay aside, or put off, as one would do an old rotten garment, cast it away with indignation, never put it on more. The sins to be put off, or thrown aside, are, 1. *Malice*, which may be taken more generally for all sorts of wickedness, as *Jam. i. 21.* *1 Cor. v. 8.* But in a more confined sense, malice is anger resting in the bosom of fools, settled, over-grown anger, retained till it inflames a man to design mischief, to do mischief, or delight in any mischief that befalls another.

2. *Guile*, or deceit in words. So it comprehends flattery, falsehood, and delusion, which is a crafty imposing upon another's ignorance or weakness to his damage.

3. *Hypocrisies*. The word being plural, comprehends all sorts of hypocrisies. In matters of religion hypocrisy is counterfeit piety. In civil conversation hypocrisy is counterfeit friendship, which is much practised by those that give high compliments, which they do not believe, or make promises which they never intend to perform, or pretend friendship, when mischief lies in their hearts.

4. *All envies*. Every thing that may be called envy, which is a grieving



grieving at the good and welfare of another ; at their abilities, prosperity, fame, or successful labours.

5. Evil-speaking, which is detraction, speaking against another, or detaming him, it is rendred backbiting, 2 Cor. xii. 20. Rom. i. 30.

Learn, 1. The best Christians have need to be cautioned and warned against the worst sins, such as malice, hypocrisy, envy. They are but sanctified in part, and are still liable to temptations.

2. Our best services towards God will neither please him, nor profit us, if we are not conscientious in our duties to men. The sins here mentioned are offences against the second table. These must be laid aside, or else we cannot receive the word of God as we ought to do.

3. Whereas it is said, all malice, all guile. Learn, That one sin not laid aside will hinder our spiritual profit, and everlasting welfare.

4. Malice, envy, hatred, hypocrisy and evil-speaking generally go together. Evil-speaking is a sign that malice and guile lies in the heart ; and all of them combine to hinder our profiting by the word of God.

2. As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby :

The apostle like a wise physician having prescribed the purging out vicious humours, goes on to direct to wholesome and regular food, that they may grow thereby. The duty exhorted to, is a strong and constant desire of the *word of God*, which word is here called reasonable milk. Only that phrase not being proper English, our translators turned it *the milk of the word*, by which we are to understand food proper to the soul, or a reasonable creature, whereby the mind, not the body, is nourished and strengthened. This milk of the word must be sincere, not adulterated by the mixtures of men, who often corrupt the word of God, 2 Cor. ii. 17. The manner how they are to desire this sincere milk of the word, is stated thus: As new born babes. He puts them in mind of their regeneration. A new life requires suitable food. They being newly born must desire the milk of the word: Infants desire common milk, and their desires towards it are fervent and frequent, arising from an impatient sense of hunger, and accompanied with the best endeavours the infant is capable of; such must Christians desires be after the word of God: And that for this end, that they may grow thereby, that we may improve in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, 2 Pet. iii. 18.

Learn, 1. Strong desires and affection to the word of God, are a sure evidence of a person's being born again. If they be such desires as the babe hath for the milk, they prove that the person is new born. They are the lowest evidence, but yet they are certain.

2. Growth and improvement in wisdom and grace is the design and desire of every Christian; all spiritual means are for edification and improvement. The word of God rightly used does not leave a man as it finds him, but improves and makes him better.

3. If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

If so be, or since that, or soasmuch as ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. The apostle does not express a doubt, but affirms that these good Christians had tasted the goodness of God, and from hence argues with them, you ought to lay aside these vile sins, *ver.* 1. you ought to desire the word of God, you ought to grow thereby, since you cannot deny but that you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. The next verse assures us, that the Lord here spoken of is the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence,

Learn, 1. That our Lord Jesus Christ is very gracious to his people. He is in himself infinitely good; he is very kind, free, merciful to miserable sinners; he is pitiful and good to the undeserving; he hath in him a fulness of grace.

2. The graciousness of our Redeemer is best discovered by an experimental taste of it. There must be an immediate application of the object to the organ of taste; we cannot taste at a distance, as we may see, and hear, and smell. To taste the graciousness of Christ experimentally, supposeth our being united to him by faith, and then we may taste his goodness in all his providences, in all our spiritual concerns, in all our fears and temptations, in his word and worship every day.

3. The best of God's servants have in this life but a taste of the grace of Christ. A taste is but a little; it is not a draught, nor does it satisfy. It is so with the consolations of God in this life.

4. The word of God is the great instrument whereby he discovers and communicates his grace to men. They that feed upon the sincere milk of the word, they taste and experience most of his grace. In our converse with his word we should endeavour always to understand and experience more and more of his grace.

4. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious.

The apostle here enters upon a description of Jesus Christ, which he continues to *ver.* 9. Though to a capricious wit, or an infidel, the description of Christ by a stone may seem rough and harsh; yet to the Jews, who placed much of their religion in their magnificent

temple, and who understood the prophetic style, which calls the Messiah a stone (*Isa.* viii. 14. xxviii. 16.) this manner of speaking was very elegant and proper. In this metaphorical description of Jesus Christ, he is called a stone to denote his invincible strength, and everlasting duration, and to teach his servants that he is their protection and security, the foundation on which they are built, and a rock of offence to all their enemies. He is the living stone; having eternal life in himself, and being the prince of life to all his people.

The reputation and respect he hath with God and man is very different. He is disallowed of men, reprobated or rejected by his own countrymen the Jews, and by the generality of mankind, but chosen of God, separated and foreordained to be the foundation of the church, as *chap.* i. 20. and precious, a most honourable, choice worthy person, both in himself, in the esteem of God, and in the judgment of all that believe on him.

To this person so described we are obliged to come. To whom coming, not by a local motion, for that is impossible since his exaltation, but by faith, whereby we are united to him at first, and draw nigh to him ever after.

Learn, 1. That Jesus Christ is the very foundation-stone of all our hopes and happiness. He communicates the true knowledge of God, *Mat.* xi. 7. By him we have access to the Father, *John* xiv. 6. and through him are made partakers of all spiritual blessings, *Eph.* i. 3.

2. Men in general do disallow and reject Jesus Christ; they slight him, dislike him, oppose and refuse him, as scripture and experience declare, *Isa.* liii. 3.

3. However Christ be disallowed by an ungrateful world, yet he is chosen of God, and precious in his account. He is chosen and fixed upon to be the Lord of the universe, the head of the church, the saviour of his people, and the judge of the world. He is precious in the excellency of his nature, the dignity of his office, and the gloriousness of his services.

4. Those that expect mercy from this gracious Redeemer, must come to him, which is our act, though done by God's grace; an act of the soul, not of the body; a real endeavour, not a fruitless wish.

5. Ye also as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

The foundation was laid, *ver.* 4. Here is the superstructure, the materials built upon it, *ye also as living stones are built up.* The apostle is recommending the Christian church and constitution to these dispersed Jews. It was natural for them to object, that the Christian church had no such glorious temple, nor such a numerous priesthood, but its dispensation was mean, the services and sacrifices of it having nothing of that pomp and grandeur which the Jewish dispensation had. To which the apostle answers, that the Christian church is a much nobler fabrick than the Jewish temple, it is a living temple, consisting not of dead materials, but of living parts. Christ the foundation is a living stone, and Christians are lively stones, and these make a spiritual house, and they are an holy priesthood; and though they have no bloody sacrifices of beasts to offer, yet they have much better and acceptable, and they have an altar too on which to present their offerings; for they offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Learn, 1. That all sincere Christians have in them a principle of spiritual life, derived to them from Christ their head: Therefore as he is called a living stone, so they are called lively, or living stones; not dead in trespasses and sins, but alive to God by regeneration and the working of the divine Spirit.

2. The church of God is a spiritual house. The foundation is Christ, *Eph.* ii. 20. The builders are ministers, 1 Cor. iii. 10. The inhabitant is God, *Eph.* ii. 22. It is an house for its strength, beauty, variety of parts, and usefulness of the whole; it is spiritual in its foundation, Christ Jesus: in the materials of it, spiritual persons; in its furniture, the graces of the Spirit: in its connexion, being held together by the Spirit of God, and by one common faith; and in its use, which is spiritual work, to offer up spiritual sacrifices. This house is daily built up, every part of it improving, and the whole supplied in every age by the addition of new particular members.

3. All good Christians are an holy priesthood. The apostle speaks here of the generality of Christians, and tells them they are an holy priesthood; they are all select persons, sacred to God, serviceable to others, well endowed with heavenly gifts and graces, and well employed.

4. This holy priesthood must, and will offer up spiritual sacrifices to God. The spiritual sacrifices which Christians are to offer, are their bodies, souls, affections, prayers, praises, alms, and other duties.

5. The most spiritual sacrifices of the best men are not acceptable to God, but through Jesus Christ; he is the only great high-priest, through whom we and our services can be accepted; therefore, bring all your oblations to him, and by him present them to God.

6. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him, shall not be confounded.

What



What was asserted before of Christ his being a living stone, &c. is here proved from *Isa.* xxviii. 16. Where observe the manner of the apostles quoting scripture, not by book, chapter, and verse; for those distinctions were not then made, so no more was said than a reference to Moses, David, or the prophets, except once a particular psalm was named, *Acts* xiii. 33. In their quotations they kept rather to the sense, than the words of scripture, as appears from what is recited from the prophet in this place. He doth not quote the scripture, either the Hebrew, or LXX, word for word, yet makes a just and true quotation. The true sense of scripture may be justly and fully expressed in other than in scripture words. *It is contained*: The verb is active, but our translators render it passively, to avoid the difficulty of finding a nominative case for it, which had puzzled so many interpreters before them.

The matter of the quotation is this, *behold, I lay in Zion.*

Learn, 1. In the weighty matters of religion we must depend entirely upon scripture proof; Christ and his apostles appealed to Moses, David, and the ancient prophets. The word of God is the only rule God hath given us; it is a perfect and sufficient rule; and it is an intelligible and a certain rule.

2. The accounts that God hath given us in scripture concerning his Son Jesus Christ, are what require our strictest attention, *behold, I lay* ---- *John* calls for the like attention, *John* i. 29. These demands of attention to Christ shew us the excellency of the matter, the importance of it, and our own stupidity and dulness.

3. The constituting Christ Jesus head of the church, is an eminent work of God. *I lay in Zion.* The setting up the pope for head of the church, is a human contrivance, and an arrogant presumption; Christ only is the foundation and head of the church of God.

4. Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone that God hath laid in his spiritual building. The corner-stone stays inseparably with the building, supports it, unites it, and adorns it: So does Christ by his holy church, his spiritual house.

5. Jesus Christ is the corner-stone, for the support and salvation of none but such as are his sincere people. None but Zion, and such as are of Zion; not for Babylon; not for his enemies.

6. True faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to prevent a man's utter confusion. Three things put a man into great confusion, and faith prevents them all; disappointment, sin, and judgment. Faith hath a remedy for each.

7. Unto you therefore which believe, *he is precious*; but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

These words are an inference from what went before; Jesus Christ is said to be the chief corner-stone, &c. Hence the apostle infers with respect to good men, to you therefore that believe, he is precious, or he is an honour. Christ is the crown and honour of a Christian; you that believe will be so far from being ashamed of him, that you will boast of him, and glory in him for ever.

As to *wicked men*, the disobedient will go on to disallow and reject Jesus Christ; but God is resolved that he shall be, in despite of all opposition, the head of the corner.

Learn, 1. Whatever is by just and necessary consequence deduced from scripture, may be depended upon with as much certainty, as if it were contained in express words of scripture. The apostle draws an inference from the prophet's testimony. The prophet did not expressly say so, but yet he said that from which the consequence was unavoidable. Our Saviour bids them search the scriptures, because they testified of him; and yet no place in those scriptures to which he there refers them, said, that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah: But yet those scriptures do say, that he that would be born of a virgin, before the scepter departed from Judah, during the second temple, and after Daniel's seventy weeks was the Messiah; but such was Jesus Christ. To collect which conclusion, one must make use of reason, history, eye-sight, experience; and yet it is an infallible scripture conclusion for all that.

2. The business of a faithful minister is, to apply general truths to the particular condition and state of their hearers. The apostle quotes a passage, *ver.* 6. out of the prophet, then he applies it severally to good and bad. This requires wisdom, courage, and fidelity. But it is very profitable to the hearers.

3. Jesus Christ is exceeding precious to all the faithful. The majesty and grandure of his person, the dignity of his office, his near relation, his wonderful works, his immense love; every thing engages the faithful to the highest esteem and respect to Jesus Christ.

4. Disobedient people have no true faith: By disobedient people, understand, them that are unper-suadable, incredulous, and impenitent. These may have some right notions, but no solid faith.

5. They that ought to be builders of the church of Christ, are often the worst enemies that Christ hath in the world. In the Old Testament the false prophets did the most mischief; and in the New Testament the greatest opposition and cruelty that Christ met with, was from the scribes, Pharisees, chief priests, and those that pretended to build and take care of the church: still the hierarchy of Rome is the worst enemy in the world to Jesus Christ and his interest.

6. God will carry on his own work, and support the interest of Jesus Christ in the world, notwithstanding the falseness of pretended friends, and the opposition of his worst enemies.

8. And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed.

The words are taken from *Isa.* viii. 13, 14. *Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself,-----and he shall be for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence.* From whence it is plain, that Jesus Christ is the Lord of hosts, and consequently the most high God.

The builders, the chief priests refused him, and the people followed their leaders; and so Christ became to them *a stone of stumbling and a rock of defence*, at which they stumbled, and hurt themselves; and in return he fell upon them as a mighty stone or rock, and punished them with destruction. *Mat.* xxi. 44. *Whoever shall fall on this stone, shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.*

Learn, 1. All those that are disobedient take offence at the word of God. *They stumble at the word, being disobedient.* They are offended with Christ himself, with his doctrine, and the purity of his precepts; but the Jewish doctors more especially stumbled at the meanness of his appearance, and the proposal of trusting only to him for their justification before God. They could not be brought to seek justification by faith, but as it were by the works of the law; *for they stumbled at that stumbling stone*, *Rom.* ix. 32.

2. The same blessed Jesus, who is the author of salvation to some, is to others the occasion of their sin and destruction: *He is set for the rising and fall of many in Israel.* He is not the author of their sin, but only the occasion of it; their own disobedience makes them stumble at him, and reject him; which he punishes, as a judge, with destruction. They that rejected him as a saviour, will split upon him as a rock.

3. God himself hath appointed everlasting destruction to all those who *stumble at the word, being disobedient.* All those that go on resolutely in their fidelity and contempt of the gospel, are appointed to eternal destruction; and God from eternity knows who they are.

4. To see the Jews generally rejecting Christ, and multitudes in all ages slighting him, ought not to discourage us in our love and duty to him; for this hath been foretold by the prophets long ago, and is a confirmation of our faith both in the scriptures, and in the Messiah.

9. But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

The Jews were exceeding tender of their ancient privileges, of being the only people of God, taken into a special covenant with him, and separated from the rest of the world. Now, say they, if we submit to the gospel constitution, we shall lose all this, and stand upon the same level with the Gentiles. To this objection the apostle answers, 1. That if they did not submit they were ruined, *ver.* 7, 8. 2. That if they did submit, they should lose no real advantage, but continue still what they desired to be, *a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, &c.*

Learn, 1. That all true Christians *are a chosen generation*; they all make one family, a sort and species of people distinct from the common world; of another spirit, principle, and practice; which they could never be, if they were not chosen in Christ to be such, and sanctified by his Spirit.

2. All the true servants of Christ *are a royal priesthood*; they are royal in their relation to God and Christ; in their power with God and over themselves, and all their spiritual enemies; they are princely in the improvements and excellency of their own spirits, and in their hopes and expectations; they are *a royal priesthood*, separated from sin and sinners, consecrated to God, and offering to God spiritual services and oblations acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

3. All Christians, wheresoever they be, compose one *holy nation*; they are one nation collected under one head, agreeing in the same manners and customs, and governed by the same laws. And they are *an holy nation*, because consecrated and devoted to God, renewed and sanctified by his holy Spirit.

4. It is the honour of the servants of Christ, that they are God's *peculiar people*: They are the people of his acquisition, choice, care, and delight. These four dignities of all genuine Christians are not natural to them; for their first state is a state of horrid darkness, but they are effectually *called out of darkness* into a state of *marvellous light*, joy, pleasure, and prosperity; with this intent and view, that they *should shew forth*, by words and actions, the virtues and praises of him that hath called them.

10. Which in time past *were* not a people, but *are* now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

To make this people content and thankful for the great mercies and



dignities brought unto them by the gospel, the apostle adviseth them to compare their former and their present state. Time was when they were not a people, nor had they obtained mercy, but were solemnly disclaimed and divorced, *Jer. iii. 8. Hos. i. 6, 9.* But now they are taken in again to be the people of God, and have obtained mercy.

Learn, 1. The best people ought frequently to look back upon what they were in time past.

2. The people of God are the most valuable people in the world; all the rest are *not a people*; good for little.

3. To be brought into the number of the people of God is a very great mercy, and it may be obtained.

11. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

Even the best of men, *the chosen generation, the people of God*, need an exhortation to abstain from the worst sins, which the apostle here proceeds most earnestly and affectionately to warn them against. Knowing the difficulty, and yet the importance of the duty, he useth his utmost interest in them, *dearly beloved, I beseech you.*

The duty is to abstain from, and to suppress the first inclination or rise of *fleshly lusts*. There are many of them that proceed from the corruption of nature, which in their exercise depend upon the body, gratifying some sensual appetite, or inordinate inclination of the flesh. These Christians ought to avoid, considering,

1. The respect they have with God and good men: They are *dearly beloved*.

2. Their condition in the world. *They are strangers and pilgrims*, and should not impede their passage by giving into the wickedness and lusts of the country through which they pass.

3. The mischief and danger these sins do: *They war against the soul*; and therefore your souls ought to war against them.

Learn, 1. The grand mischief that sin does to man, is this; it *war against the soul*; it destroys the moral liberty of the soul; it weakens and debilitates the soul by impairing its faculties: it robs the soul of its comfort and peace; it debaseth and destroys the dignity of the soul; hinders its present prosperity, and plunges it into everlasting misery.

2. Of all sorts of sin, none more injurious to the soul than *fleshly lusts*. Carnal appetites, lewdness, and sensuality, are most odious to God, and destructive to man's soul. It is a sore judgment to be given up to them.

12. Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

These Christian people are here exhorted to adorn their profession by an honest conversation. Their conversation in every turn, every instance, and every action of their lives ought to be honest; that is, good, lovely, decent, amiable, and without blame. And that because they lived among the Gentiles, people of another religion, and who were inveterate enemies to them, that did already slander them, and constantly speak evil of them *as of evil-doers*. A clean, just, good conversation may not only stop their mouths, but may possibly be a means to bring them to glorify God, and turn to you, when they shall see you excel all others in good works; They now call you evil-doers, vindicate your selves by good works; and this is the way to convince them. There is *a day of visitation* a coming, wherein God may call them by his word and his grace to repentance, and then they will glorify God, and applaud you for your excellent conversation, *Luke i. 68.* When the gospel shall come among them, and take effect, a good conversation will encourage them in their conversion, but an evil one will obstruct.

Note, 1. A Christian profession should be attended with an honest conversation, *Phil. iv. 8.*

2. It is the common lot of the best Christians to be evil spoken of by wicked men.

3. Those that are under God's gracious visitation, do presently change their opinion of good people, glorifying God, and commending them, who before they railed at as *evil-doers*.

13. Submit your selves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

14. Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well.

The general rule of a Christian conversation is this, it must be honest; which it cannot be, if there be not a conscientious discharge of all relative duties; the apostle does here begin to treat of those distinctly; Christians were not only reputed innovators in religion, but disturbers of the state, it was highly necessary the apostle should settle the rules and measures of obedience to the civil magistrate, which he does here; where, 1. The duty required is submission, which contains loyalty and reverence to their persons, obedience to their just laws and commands, and subjection to legal penalties.

2. The persons, or objects, to whom this submission is due, are described,

1. More generally; *every ordinance of man*: Magistracy is certainly of divine right, but the particular form of government, the power of the magistrate, and the persons who are to execute this power, are of human institution, and are governed by the laws and constitutions of each particular country; and this is a general rule, binding in all nations, let the established form of government be what it will.

2. Particularly; *to the king, as supreme*; first in dignity, and most eminent in degree; *the king* is a legal person, not a tyrant; *or unto governors*, deputies, proconsuls, rulers of provinces, who *are sent by him*, that is, commissioned by him to govern.

3. The reasons to enforce this duty, are, 1. It must be done *for the Lord's sake*, who hath ordained magistracy for the good of mankind, who hath required obedience and submission, *Rom. xiii.* and whose honour is concerned in the dutiful behaviour of subjects to their sovereigns.

2. Reason; from the end and use of the magistrate's office, which is to punish *evil-doers*, and to praise and encourage all *them that do well*; they were appointed for the good of societies, and where this end is not pursued, the fault is not in their institution, but their practice.

1. True religion is the best support of civil government, it requires submission *for the Lord's sake*, and *for conscience sake*.

2. All the *punishments*, and all the magistrates in the world, cannot hinder, but there will still be *evil-doers* in it.

3. The best way the magistrate can take to discharge his own office, and to amend the world, is to punish well, and reward well.

15. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

Here is another reason why Christians should submit to the civil magistrate, because it *is the will of God*, and, consequently, their duty, and because it is the way to *put to silence* the malicious slanders of ignorant and *foolish men*.

Learn, 1. *The will of God is*, to a good man, the strongest reason for any duty.

2. Obedience to magistrates is a considerable branch of a Christian's duty; *so is the will of God*.

3. A Christian must endeavour, in all relations, to behave himself so, as to *put to silence* the unreasonable reproaches of the most ignorant and *foolish men*.

4. Those that speak against religion, and religious people, are ignorant and foolish.

16. As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

The Jews, from *Deut. xvii. 15.* concluded, that they were bound to obey no sovereign, but one *taken from among their own brethren*; and the converted Jews thought they were *free* from subjection, by their relation to Christ: To prevent these mistakes, the apostle tells the Christians that they were *free*; but from what? not from duty and obedience to God's law, which requires subjection to the civil magistrate; they were *free* spiritually from the bondage of sin and Satan, and the ceremonial law, but they must not make their *Christian liberty a cloke*, or covering, for any wickedness, or the neglect of any duty towards God, or towards their superiors, but must still remember they were *the servants of God*.

Learn, 1. All the *servants of Christ are free men*, John viii. 36. they are *free* from Satan's dominion, the law's condemnation, the wrath of God, the uneasiness of duty, and the terrors of death.

2. The *servants of Jesus Christ* ought to be very careful not to abuse their *Christian liberty*; they must not make it a cover or *cloke* for any wickedness against God, or disobedience to superiors.

17. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

The apostle concludes his discourse concerning the duty of subjects with four admirable precepts: 1. *Honour all men*. A due respect is to be given to *all men*; the poor are not to be despised, *Prov. xvii. 5.* the wicked must be *honoured*, not for their wickedness, but for any other qualities, such as wit, prudence, courage, eminency of employment, or the hoary head; Abram, Jacob, Samuel, the prophets, and apostles, never scrupled to give due *honour* to bad men.

2. *Love the brotherhood*. All Christians are a fraternity, united to Christ the head, alike disposed and qualified, nearly related, in the same interest, having communion one with another, and going to the same home, and therefore should love one another with an especial affection.

3. *Fear God*, with the highest reverence, duty, and submission; if this be wanting, none of the other three duties can be performed as they ought.

4. *Honour the king*, with that highest honour that is peculiarly due to him above other men.

18. Servants, be subject to your masters, with all fear, not only to the good and gentle, but also to the steward.



The case of servants wanted an apostolical determination as well as that of subjects, for they imagined that their Christian liberty did set them free from their unbelieving and cruel *masters*; to this the apostle answers, *servants, be subject*; by *servants*, he means those that were strictly such, whether hired, or bought with money, or taken in the wars, or born in the house, or those that serve by contract for a limited time, as apprentices; these he orders to *be subject*, to do their business faithfully and honestly, to carry, as inferiors ought, with reverence and affection, and to submit patiently to hardships and inconveniencies; this subjection they owe to their *masters*, who have a right to their service, and that *not only to the good and gentle*, such as do use them well, and abate somewhat of their right, *but even to the crooked and perverse*, who are scarce to be pleased at all.

Learn, 1. *Servants* ought to carry themselves to their *masters* with submission, and fear of displeasing them.

2. The sinful miscarriage of one relation does not justify the sinful behaviour of the other; the *servant* is bound to his duty, though the *master* be sinfully froward and perverse.

3. Good people are *meek and gentle to their servants*, and inferiors.

19. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. 20. For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God.

Our holy apostle shews his love and concern for the souls of poor *servants*, as well as for higher people; herein he ought to be imitated by all inferior ministers, who should distinctly apply their counsels to the lower, the meaner, the younger, and the poorer sort of their hearers, as well as others; having charged them to *be subject*, he condescends to reason with them about it; if they were patient under their hardships, while they suffered unjustly, and continued doing their duty to their unbelieving and untoward *masters*, this would be *acceptable to God*, and he would reward all that they suffered for conscience towards him, but to be patient when they were justly chastised, this deserves no commendation at all; it is only *doing well, and suffering patiently for that, which is acceptable with God*.

Learn, 1. There is no condition so mean, but a man may live conscientiously in it, and glorify God in it; the meanest *servant* may do so.

2. The most conscientious persons are very often the greatest sufferers; for conscience towards God they suffer wrongfully; they do well, and suffer for it; but these sort of sufferers are praise-worthy, they do honour to God, and to religion, and they are accepted of him; and this is their highest support and satisfaction.

3. Deserved sufferings must be endured with patience; if ye are buffeted for your faults, ye must take it patiently; sufferings in this world are not always pledges of our future happiness; if children, or servants, are rude and undutiful, and suffer for it, this will neither be *acceptable with God*, nor procure the praise of men.

21. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

More reasons are given to encourage Christian servants to patience under unjust sufferings: 1. From their Christian calling and profession; *hereunto were ye called*. 2. From the example of Christ, who suffered for us, and so became our example, that we should follow his steps. From whence learn,

1. That good Christians are a sort of people called to be sufferers, and therefore they must expect it; by the terms of Christianity they are bound to *deny themselves*, and *take up the cross*; they are called by the commands of Christ, by the dispensations of providence, by the preparations of divine grace, and, by the practice of Jesus Christ, they are bound to suffer, when thus called to it.

2. Jesus Christ suffered for you, or, for us; it was not the Father that suffered, but he whom the Father sanctified, and sent into the world for that end; it was both the body and soul of Christ that suffered, and he suffered for us, in our stead, and for our good, ver. 24.

3. The sufferings of Christ should quiet us under the most unjust and cruel sufferings we meet with in the world; he suffered voluntarily, not for himself, but for us, with the utmost readiness, with perfect patience, from all quarters, and all this, though he was God-man; shall not we, sinners, that deserve the worst, submit to the light afflictions of this life, which work for us unspeakable advantages afterwards?

22. Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: 23. Who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

The example of Christ's subjection and patience is here explained and amplified: *Christ suffered*,

(1.) Wrongfully, and without cause; for he *did no sin*, Isa. liii. 9. *He had done no violence*, no injustice, or wrong, to any one; he wrought no iniquity of any sort whatever, *neither was guile found in his mouth*; his words, as well as actions, were all sincere, just, and right.

(2.) Patiently; *when he was reviled, he reviled not again*; when they blasphemed him, mocked him, called him foul names, he was *dumb, and opened not his mouth*; when they went farther to real injuries, beating, buffeting, and crowning him with thorns, *he threatened not*; but committed both himself and his cause to God that judgeth righteously, who would, in time, clear his innocency, and avenge him on his enemies.

Learn, 1. Our blessed Redeemer was perfectly holy, and so free from sin, that no temptation, no provocation whatsoever, could extort from him so much as the least sinful or indecent word.

2. Provocations to sin can never justify the commission of it; the rudeness, cruelty, and injustice of enemies, will not justify Christians in reviling and revenge; the reasons for sin can never be so great, but we have always stronger reasons to avoid it.

3. The judgment of God will determine justly upon every man, and every cause, and thither we ought, with patience and resignation, to refer ourselves.

24. Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Lest any should think, from what is said, ver. 21, 22, 23. that Christ's death was designed only for an example of patience under sufferings, the apostle here adds a more glorious design and effect of it; *who his own self*, &c. where,

Note, 1. The person suffering, Jesus Christ, *his own self*, in *his own body*; the expression, *his own self*, is emphatical, and necessary to shew, that he verified all the ancient prophecies, to distinguish him from the Levitical priests, who offered the blood of others, but he by himself purged our sins, Heb. vii. 3. and to exclude all others from participation with him in the work of man's redemption; it is added, *in his body*; not but that he suffered in his soul, Matt. xxvi. 38. but the sufferings of the soul were inward and concealed, when those of the body were visible, and more obvious to the consideration of these suffering servants, for whose sake the example is produced.

2. The sufferings he underwent, *were stripes*, wounds, and death, *the death of the cross*; servile and ignominious punishments!

3. The reason of his sufferings; he *bare our sins*; which teaches, (1.) That Christ, in his suffering, stood charged with our sins, as one that had undertaken to put them away by the sacrifice of himself, Isa. liii. 6.

(2.) That he bare the punishment of them, and thereby satisfied divine justice.

(3.) That hereby he takes away our sins, and removes them away from us, as the scape-goat did typically bear the sins of the people on his head, and then carried them quite away, Lev. xvi. 21. so the Lamb of God does first bear our sins in his own body, and thereby take away the sin of the world, John i. 29.

(4.) The fruits of Christ's sufferings are, 1. Our sanctification, consisting of the death, the mortification of sin, and a new holy life of *righteousness*; for both which we have an example, and powerful motives and abilities also, from the death and resurrection of Christ. 2. Our justification; Christ was bruised and crucified as an expiatory sacrifice, and *by his stripes we are healed*.

Learn, 1. Jesus Christ bore the sins of all his people, and expiated them by his death upon the cross.

2. No man can depend safely upon Christ, as having bore his sin, and expiated his guilt, till he *dies unto sin*, and *lives unto righteousness*.

25. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

The apostle concludes his advice to Christian servants, putting them in mind of the difference between their former and present condition; they *were as sheep going astray*; which represents, 1. Man's sin, *he goes astray*; it is his own act, he is not driven, but does voluntarily go astray. 2. His misery, *he goes astray* from the pasture, from the shepherd, and from the flock, and so exposes himself to innumerable dangers.

2. Here is the recovery of these by conversion; *but are now returned*: The word is passive, and shews, that the return of a sinner is the effect of divine grace: This return is from all their errors and wanderings to Christ, who is the true, careful Shepherd that loves his sheep, and laid down his life for them; who is the most vigilant Pastor, and Bishop, or Overseer of souls.

Learn, 1. Sinners, before their conversion, are always going astray; their life is a continued error.

2. Jesus Christ is the supreme Shepherd and Bishop of souls, who is always resident with his flock, and watchful over them.

3. Those that expect the love and care of this universal Pastor, must return to him; must *die unto sin*, and *live unto righteousness*.



## C H A P. III.

Wherein the apostle describes the duties of husbands and wives one to another, beginning with the duty of the wife, ver. 1,—7. He exhorts Christians to unity, love, compassion, peace, and patience under sufferings; to oppose the slanders of their enemies, not by returning evil for evil, or railing for railing, but by blessing; by a ready account of their faith and hope, and by keeping a good conscience, ver. 8,—17. To encourage them to this, he proposeth the example of Christ, who suffered, the just for the unjust, but yet punished the old world for their disobedience, and saved the few that were faithful in the days of Noah.

1. Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives, 2. While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

The apostle having treated of the duties of subjects to their sovereigns, and of servants to their masters, he comes now to explain the duty of wives to their husbands, for fear the Christian matrons should imagine that their conversion to Christ, and their interest in all Christian privileges, did exempt them from *subjection to their Pagan or Jewish husbands*; the apostle here tells them, that the duty of *wives* consists,

(1.) In *subjection*, or a loving submission to the will, and obedience to the just authority of *their own husbands*; which obliging carriage would be the most likely way to win those disobedient and unbelieving husbands, who had rejected the word, or, who attended to no other evidence of the truth of it, but what they saw in the prudent, peaceable, and exemplary conversation of their wives.

(2.) In a *chaste conversation*, which their unbelieving husbands would accurately observe, and attend to.

(3.) In *fear*, or reverence to their husbands, Eph. v. 33.

Learn, 1. Every distinct relation hath its particular duties, which ministers ought to preach, and the people ought to understand.

2. A cheerful *subjection*, and a loving, reverential respect, are duties which Christian women owe their husbands, whether they be good or bad; these were due from Eve to Adam, before the fall, and are still required, though much more difficult now than they were before, Gen. iii. 16. 1 Tim. iii. 11.

3. Though the design of the word of the gospel is to win and gain souls to Christ Jesus, yet there are many so obstinate, that they will not be *won by the word*.

4. There is nothing more powerful, next to the word of God, to win people, than a good conversation, and the careful discharge of relative duties.

5. Irreligion and infidelity doth not dissolve the bonds, nor dispense with the duties of civil relations; *the wife* must discharge her duty to *her own husband*, though he *obey not the word*.

6. Evil men are strict observers of the conversation of the professors of religion; their curiosity, envy, and jealousy, make them watch narrowly the ways and lives of good people.

7. A *chaste conversation*, attended with due and proper respect to every one, is an excellent means to win them to the faith of the gospel, and obedience to the word.

3. Whose adorning, let it not be that outward *adorning*, of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel:

This rule relates to the dress of religious women; here are three sorts of ornaments forbidden; *plaiting the hair*, which was commonly used in those times by lewd women; *wearing of gold*, or ornaments made of gold, was practised by Rebecca, and Esther, and other religious women, but afterwards became the attire chiefly of whores, and wicked people; *putting on of apparel* is not absolutely forbidden, but only too much curiosity and costliness in apparel.

Learn, 1. Religious people should take care that all their external behaviour be answerable to their profession of Christianity; *they must be holy in all manner of conversation*.

2. The *outward adorning* of the body is very often sinful and excessive; for instance, when it is immoderate, and above your degree and station in the world; when you are proud of it, and puffed up with it; when you dress designing to allure and tempt others; when your apparel is too rich, curious, or superfluous; when your fashions are fantastical, imitating the levity and vanity of the worst people; and when they are immodest and wanton: *The attire of an harlot* can never become a chaste Christian matron.

4. But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Instead of the *outward adorning* of the body, the apostle directs Christian wives to put on much more excellent and beautiful ornaments; where,

Note, 1. The part to be adorned; *the hidden man of the heart*; that is, the soul; *the hidden, the inner man*: Take care to adorn and beautify your souls, rather than your bodies.

2. The ornaments prescribed; it must, in general, be something not corruptible that beautifies the soul, i. e. the graces and virtues of God's holy Spirit; *the ornaments* of the body are destroyed by the moth, and perish in the using; but the grace of God, the longer we wear it, the brighter and better it is: More especially, the finest ornament of Christian women is a *meek and quiet spirit*; a tractable, easy temper of mind, void of passion, pride, and immoderate anger; discovering itself in a quiet, obliging behaviour towards their husbands and families: If the husband be harsh, and averse to religion (which was the case of these good wives to whom the apostle gives this direction) there is no way so likely to win him, as a prudent, *meek* behaviour: However, a *quiet spirit* will make a good woman easy to herself, which, being visible to others, becomes an amiable ornament to a person in the eyes of the world.

3. The excellency of it; this *meekness*, and calmness of spirit, is in the sight of God of great price; it is amiable in the sight of men, and precious in the sight of God.

Learn, 1. A true Christian's chief care lies in the right ordering and commanding of his own spirit; where the hypocrite's work ends, there the true Christian's work begins.

2. The endowments of *the inner man* are the chief ornaments of a Christian; but, especially, a composed, calm, and quiet spirit, renders either man or woman beautiful and lovely.

5. For after this manner in the old time, the holy women also who trusted in God adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands; 6. Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

The duties of Christian wives being in their nature difficult, the apostle enforceth them by the example,

1. Of *the holy women of old, who trusted in God*; you can pretend nothing of excuse from the weakness of your sex, but what they might; they lived in *old time*, and had less knowledge to inform them, and fewer examples to encourage them; yet, in all ages, they practised this duty; they were *holy women*, and therefore their example is obliging; they *trusted in God*, and yet did not neglect their duty to man; the duties imposed upon you of a *quiet spirit*, and of *subjection to your own husband*, are not new, but what have ever been practised by the greatest and best women in the world.

2. Of *Sara, who obeyed her husband*, and followed him when he went from Ur of the Chaldeans, *not knowing whither he went*, and called him *lord*, thereby shewing him reverence, and acknowledging his superiority over her; and all this, though she was declared a princess by God from heaven, by the change of her name; *whose daughters ye are*, if you imitate her in faith, and good works, and do not, through fear of your husbands, either quit the truth you profess, or perform your duty to them, but readily perform it, without either fear or force, out of conscience towards God, and sense of duty to them.

Learn, 1. God takes exact notice, and keeps an exact record, of the actions and carriage of all men and women in the world.

2. The *subjection of wives to their husbands*, is a duty which hath been practised universally by *holy women* in all ages.

3. The greatest honour of any man or woman lies in an humble and faithful deportment of themselves in the relation or condition in which providence hath placed them.

4. God takes notice of the good that is in his servants, to their honour and benefit, but covers a multitude of failings; Sara's infidelity and derision is overlooked, when her virtues are celebrated.

5. Christians ought to do their duty to one another, not out of fear, nor from force, but from a willing mind, and in obedience to the command of God; *wives* should be in *subjection to their churlish husbands*, not from dread, and amazement, but from a desire to do well, and to please God.

7. Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

The husband's duty to the wife comes next to be considered, the particulars whereof are,

1. Cohabitation; which forbids unnecessary separation, and implies a mutual communication of goods and persons one to another, with delight and concord.

2. *Dwelling with the wife according to knowledge*; not according to lust, as brutes; nor according to passion, as devils; but according to knowledge, as wife and sober men, that know the word of God, and their own duty.

3. *Giving honour to the wife*; giving due respect unto her, and maintaining her authority, protecting her person, supporting her credit, delighting in her conversation, affording an handsome maintenance, and placing a due trust and confidence in her.



The reasons are, because she is *the weaker vessel*, by nature and constitution, and so ought to be defended; but then the wife is, in other and higher respects, equal to her husband; they are *heirs together of the grace of life*, of all the blessings of this life and another, and therefore should live peaceably and quietly one with another, which, if they do not, *their prayers* one with another, and one for another, will be *hindered*, so that often you will not pray at all, or, if you do, you will pray with a discomposed, ruffled mind, and so without success.

Learn, 1. The weakness of the female sex, is no just reason, either for separation, or contempt, but, on the contrary, it is a reason for honour and respect; *giving honour to the wife as unto the weaker vessel*.

2. There is an honour due to all that are *heirs of the grace of life*.

3. All married people should take care to behave themselves so lovingly and peaceably one to another, that they may not by their broils hinder the success of their prayers.

8. Finally, *be ye* all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, *be* pitiful, *be* courteous:

The apostle does here pass from special, to more general exhortations; he advises Christians to *be all of one mind*, to be unanimous in the belief of the same faith, and practice of the same duties of religion; and, whereas the Christians at that time were many of them in a suffering condition, therefore he charges them to *have compassion one of another*, to *love as brethren*, to *pity* those that were in distress, and to *be courteous* to all. Hence,

Learn, 1. Christians should endeavour to *be all of one mind* in the great points of faith, in real affection, and in Christian practice; they should be *like-minded one to another*, according to Christ Jesus, Rom. xv. 5. not according to man's pleasure, but God's word.

2. Though Christians cannot be exactly of *the same mind*, yet they should *have compassion one of another*, and *love as brethren*; they ought not to persecute, or hate *one another*, but *love one another*, with more than common affection; they should *love as brethren*.

3. Christianity requires *pity* to the distressed, and civility to all. He must be a flagrant sinner, or a vile apostate, that is not a proper object of civil courtesy, 1 Cor. v. 11. 2 John 10, 11.

9. Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise, blessing: knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

The former direction teacheth us how Christians and friends should treat one another, this verse instructs us how to behave towards enemies; the apostle knew that Christians would be *hated*, and evil intreated *of all men for Christ's sake*; therefore he warns them not to return *evil for evil*, or *railing for railing*; but, on the contrary, when they rail at you, do you bless them; when they give you evil words, do you give them good ones; for Christ hath, both by his word and example, *called you to bless them that curse you*, and hath settled a blessing on you, as your everlasting inheritance, though you were unworthy: To bear evils patiently, and to bless your enemies, is the way to obtain this blessing of God.

Learn, 1. To *render evil for evil*, or *railing for railing*, is a sinful, unchristian practice; the magistrate may punish *evil-doers*, and private men may seek a legal remedy when they are wronged; but private revenge by duelling, scolding, or secret mischief, is forbidden, Prov. xx. 22. Luke vi. 27. Rom. xii. 17. 1 Thess. v. 15. To rail is to revile another in bitter, fierce, and reproachful terms; but for ministers to rebuke sharply, and to preach earnestly against the sins of the times, is not railing, all the prophets and apostles practised it, Isa. lvi. 10. Zeph. iii. 3. Acts xx. 29.

2. The laws of Christ oblige us to return blessing for railing, Matt. v. 44. *Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute you*. You must not justify them in their sin, but you must do for your enemies all that justice requires, or charity commands; we must *pity, pray for, and love them* that rail at us.

3. A Christian's calling, as it invests him with glorious privileges, so it obligeth him to difficult duties.

4. All the true servants of God shall infallibly *inherit a blessing*; they have it already in a great degree, but the full possession of it is reserved to another state and world.

10. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. 11. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

We have here an excellent prescription for a comfortable, happy life in this quarrelsome, ill-natured world, taken from Psalm xxxiv. 12, 13, 14. If you earnestly desire that your life should be long, and your days peaceable and prosperous, keep your tongue from reviling, evil-speaking, and slandering; and your lips from lying, deceit, and dissimulation; avoid doing any real damage or hurt to your neighbour, but be ever ready to *do good*, and to *overcome evil with good*; *seek peace* with all men, and *pursue it*, though it retire

from you; this will be the best way to dispose people to speak well of you, and live peaceably with you.

Learn, 1. That good people under the Old and New Testament were obliged to the same moral duties; to *refrain the tongue from evil, and the lips from guile*, was a duty in David's time as well as now.

2. It is lawful to consider temporal advantages as motives and encouragements to religion.

3. The practice of religion, particularly the right government of the tongue, is the best way to make this life comfortable and prosperous; a sincere, inoffensive, discreet tongue, is a singular means to pass us peaceably and comfortably through the world.

4. The avoiding of evil, and doing of good, is the way to contentment and happiness, both here and hereafter.

5. It is the duty of Christians, not only to embrace *peace* when it is offered, but to *seek and pursue it* when it is denied; *peace* with societies, and *peace* with particular persons, in opposition to division and contention, is what is here intended.

12. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

The allegation is continued from Psalm xxxiv. Christians need not fear that such patient, inoffensive behaviour, as is prescribed, ver. 10, 11. will invite and encourage the cruelty of their enemies, for God will thereby be engaged on their side, *for the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous*, he taketh special notice of them, and exercises a providential, constant government over them, and bears a special respect and affection to them; *his ears are open to their prayers*; so that if any injuries be offered to them, they have this remedy, they may complain of it to their heavenly Father, whose ears are always attentive to the prayers of his servants in their distresses, and who will certainly aid them against their unrighteous enemies; *but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil*; his anger, and displeasure, and revenge, will pursue them; for he is more an enemy to wicked persecutors than men are.

Learn, 1. That we must not in all cases adhere to the express words of scripture, but study the sense and meaning of them, otherwise we shall be led into blasphemous errors and absurdities; we must not imagine that God hath eyes, and ears, and face, though these are the express words of scripture.

2. God hath a special care, and paternal affection, towards all his righteous people.

3. God doth always hear the prayers of the faithful, John ix. 31. 1 John v. 14. Heb. iv. 16.

4. Though God is infinitely good, yet he abhorreth impenitent sinners, and will pour out his wrath upon *them that do evil*; he will do himself right, and do all the world justice; and his goodness is no obstruction to his doing so.

13. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? 14. But and if ye suffer for righteousness sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

The patient, humble behaviour of Christians, recommended above, is here urged again from two considerations: 1. This will be the best and surest way to prevent suffering; for *who is he that will harm you?* This, I suppose, is spoken of Christians in an ordinary condition, not in the heat of persecution; ordinarily there will be but few so diabolical and impious as to harm them that live so innocently and usefully as you do. 2. This is the way to improve sufferings; *if you be followers of that which is good*, and yet suffer, this is *suffering for righteousness sake*; and that will be your glory, and your happiness, as it entitles you to the blessing promised by Christ, Matt. v. 10. therefore you need not be afraid of any thing they can do to strike you with terror, neither be much troubled, or concerned, about the rage or force of your enemies.

Learn, 1. To follow always *that which is good*, is the best course we can take to keep out of harm's way.

2. To *suffer for righteousness sake*, is the honour and happiness of a Christian; to suffer for the cause of truth, a good conscience, or any part of a Christian's duty, is a great honour; the delight of it is greater than the torment, the honour more than the disgrace, and the gain much greater than the loss.

3. Christians have no reason to be afraid of the threats or rage of any of their enemies; your enemies are God's enemies, *his face is against them*, his power is above them, they are the objects of his curse, and can do nothing at you but by his permission, therefore trouble not yourselves about them.

15. But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear:

Instead of terrifying yourselves with the fear of men, be sure to *sanctify the Lord God in your hearts*; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread, Isa. viii. 12, 13. *Fear not them that can only kill the body, but fear him that can destroy body and soul*, Luke xii. 4.



We *sanctify the Lord God in our hearts*, when we with sincerity and fervency adore him; when our thoughts of him are awful and reverend; when we rely upon his power, trust unto his faithfulness, submit to his wisdom, imitate his holiness, and give him the glory due to his most illustrious perfections: We *sanctify God* before others, when our deportment is such, as invites and encourages others to glorify and honour him; both are required, *Levit. x. 3*. When this principle is laid deep into your hearts, the next thing, as to men, is to be always ready, that is, able and willing, to give an answer, or make an apology, or defence, of the faith you profess, and that to every man that asketh a reason of your hope, what sort of hope you have for which you suffer such hardships in the world.

Learn, 1. An awful sense of the divine perfections is the best antidote against the fear of sufferings; did we fear God more, we should certainly fear men less.

2. That the hope and faith of a Christian is defensible against all the world; there may be a good reason given for religion, it is not a fancy, but a rational scheme revealed from heaven, suited to all the necessities of miserable sinners, and centering entirely in the glory of God through Jesus Christ.

3. Every Christian is bound to answer and apologize for the hope that is in him; Christians should have a reason ready for their Christianity, that it may appear they are not acted either by folly or fancy; this defence may be necessary more than once or twice, so that Christians should be always prepared to make it, either to the magistrate, if he demand it, or to any inquisitive, serious Christian, that desires to know it for his information, or improvement.

4. These confessions of our faith ought to be made with meekness and fear; apologies for our religion ought to be made with modesty and meekness, in the fear of God, with jealousy over ourselves, and reverence to our superiors.

16. Having a good conscience; that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil-doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. 17. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing.

The confession of a Christian's faith cannot credibly be supported, but by the two means here specified, a good conscience, and a good conversation: Conscience is good when it does its office well, when it is kept pure and uncorrupt, and clear from guilt, then it will justify you, though men accuse you: A good conversation in Christ is a holy life, according to the doctrine and example of Christ; look well to your conscience, and to your conversation; and then, though men speak evil of you, and falsely accuse you, as evil-doers, you will clear yourselves, and bring them to shame: Perhaps, you may think it hard to suffer for well-doing, for keeping a good conscience, and a good conversation; but be not discouraged; for it is better for you, though worse for your enemies, that you suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing.

Learn, 1. That the most conscientious persons cannot escape the censures and slanders of evil men; they will speak evil of them, as of evil-doers, and charge them with crimes which their very souls abhor; Christ and his apostles were so used.

2. A good conscience, and a good conversation, are the best means to secure a good name; these give a solid reputation, and a lasting one.

3. False accusation generally turns to the accuser's shame, by discovering at last the accuser's indiscretion, injustice, falsehood, and uncharitableness.

4. It is sometimes the will of God that good people should suffer for well-doing, for their honesty, and for their faith.

5. As well-doing does sometimes expose a good man to suffering, so evil-doing will not exempt an evil man from it: The apostle supposeth here that a man may suffer for both: If the sufferings of good people for well-doing be so severe, what will the sufferings of wicked people be for evil-doing? It is a sad condition that person is in upon whom sin and suffering meet together at the same time; sin makes sufferings to be extreme, unprofitable, comfortless, and destructive.

18. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, (that he might bring us to God) being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

The example of Christ is here proposed as an argument for patience under sufferings, the strength of which will be discerned, if we consider the several points contained in the words; observe therefore,

1. Jesus Christ himself was not exempted from sufferings in this life, though he had no guilt of his own, and could have declined all suffering if he had pleased.

2. The reason, or meritorious cause of Christ's suffering, was the sins of men; Christ suffered for sins: The sufferings of Christ were a true and proper punishment; this punishment was suffered, to expiate, and to make an atonement for sin; and it does extend to all sins.

3. In the case of our Lord's suffering, it was the just that suffered

for the unjust; he substituted himself in our room, and stead, and bore our iniquities; he that knew no sin, suffered instead of them that knew no righteousness.

4. The merit and perfection of Christ's sacrifice was such, that for him to suffer once was enough; the legal sacrifices were repeated from day to day, and from year to year; but the sacrifice of Christ once offered, purgeth away sin, Heb. vii. 27. ix. 26, 28. x. 10, 12, 14.

5. The blessed end and design of our Lord's sufferings was to bring us to God, to reconcile us to God, to give us access to the Father, to render us and our services acceptable, and to bring us to eternal glory, Eph. ii. 13, 18. iii. 12. Heb. x. 21, 22.

6. The issue and event of Christ's suffering, as to himself, was this, he was put to death in his human nature, but he was quickened and raised again by the Spirit.

Now if Christ was not exempted from sufferings, why should Christians expect it? If he suffered to expiate sins, why should not we be content when our sufferings are only for trial and correction, but not for expiation? If he, though perfectly just, why should not we who are all criminals? If he once suffered, and then entered into glory, shall not we be patient under trouble, since it will be but a little time and we shall follow him to glory? If he suffered to bring us to God, shall not we submit to difficulties, since they are of so much use to quicken us in our return to God, and in the performance of our duty to him?

19. By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; 20. Which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved by water.

Here the apostle puffeth from the example of Christ to that of the old world, and sets before the Jews, to whom he wrote, the different event of them that believed and obeyed Christ preaching by Noah, from them that continued disobedient and unbelieving, intimating to the Jews, that they were under a like sentence, God would not wait much longer upon them, they had now an offer of mercy, those that accepted of it should be saved, but those that rejected Christ, and the gospel, should be as certainly destroyed, as ever the disobedient in the times of Noah were.

Observe here, 1. The preacher, Christ Jesus, who interested himself in the affairs of the church, and of the world, ever since he was first promised to Adam, Gen. iii. 15. He went, not by a local motion, but by special operation, as God is frequently said to move, Gen. iv. 5. Mic. i. 3. Hos. v. 15. He went and preached, by his Spirit striving with them, and inspiring and enabling Enoch and Noah to plead with them, and preach righteousness to them, as 2 Pet. ii. 5.

2. The hearers, who, because they were dead and disembodied when the apostle speaks of them, therefore he properly calls them spirits now in prison; not that they were in prison, when Christ preached to them, as the vulgar Latin translation, and the Popish expositors pretend.

3. The sin of these people, they were disobedient, that is, rebellious, unperfwadable, and unbelieving, as the word signifies; this their sin is aggravated from the patience and long-suffering of God, which once waited upon them 120 years together, while Noah was preparing the ark, and by that, as well as by his preaching, giving them fair warning of what was coming upon them.

4. The event of all; their bodies were drowned, and their spirits cast into hell, which is called a prison, Matt. v. 25. 2 Pet. ii. 4, 5. but Noah, and his family, that believed, and were obedient, were saved in the ark.

Learn, 1. That God takes exact notice of all the means and advantages that people, in all ages, have had for the salvation of their souls; it is put to the account of the old world, that Christ offered them his help, sent his Spirit, gave them fair warning by Noah, and waited a long time for their amendment.

2. Though the patience of God wait long upon sinners, yet it will expire at last; it is beneath the majesty of the great God always to wait upon man in vain.

3. The spirits of disobedient sinners, as soon as they are out of their bodies, are committed to the prison of hell, from whence there is no redemption.

4. The way of the most is neither the best, the wisest, nor the safest way to follow; better to follow the eight in the ark, than the eight millions drowned by the flood, and damned to hell.

21. The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Noah's salvation in the ark upon the water, did prefigure the salvation of all good Christians in the church by baptism; that temporal salvation by the ark was a type, the antitype whereunto is the eternal salvation of believers by baptism; to prevent mistakes about which, the apostle does, 1. Declare what he means by saving baptism, not the outward ceremony of washing with water, which, in itself,



itself, does no more than put away the *filth of the flesh*, but it is that baptism wherein there is a faithful answer or restitution of a resolved good conscience, engaging to believe in, and be entirely devoted to God the Father, Son, and holy Ghost, renouncing at the same time the flesh, the world and the devil. The baptismal covenant made and kept will certainly save us. Washing is the visible sign; this is the thing signified. 2. The apostle shews that the efficacy of baptism to salvation depends not upon the work done, but upon the resurrection of Christ; which supposeth his death, and is the foundation of our faith and hope, to which we are rendred conformable by dying to sin, and rising again to holiness and newness of life.

Learn, 1. That the sacrament of baptism rightly received is a means and a pledge of salvation. *Baptism now saveth us.* God is pleased to convey his blessings to us in and by his ordinances, *Acts* ii. 38. *ch.* xxii. 16.

2. The external participation of baptism will save no man without an answerable good conscience and conversation. There must be the *answer of a good conscience* towards God.—*Obj.* Infants cannot make such an answer, and therefore ought not to be baptized. *Ans.* The true circumcision was that of the heart and of the spirit, *Rom.* ii. 28. which children were no more capable of then, than our infants are capable of making this answer now; yet they were allowed circumcision at eight days old. The infants of the Christian church therefore may be admitted to the ordinance with as much reason as the infants of the Jewish, unless they are barred from it by some express prohibitions of Christ.

22. Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him.

The apostle having mentioned the death of Christ, *ver.* 18. and his resurrection, *ver.* 21. he proceeds to speak of his ascension, and sitting at the right hand of the Father, as a subject fit to be considered by these believers for their comfort in their suffering condition. If the advancement of Christ was so glorious after his deep humiliation, let not his followers despair, but expect that after these short distresses they shall be advanced to transcendent joy and glory.

Learn, 1. That Jesus Christ after he had finished his labours and his sufferings upon earth, did ascend triumphantly into heaven, of which see *Acts* i. 9, 10, 11. *Mark* xvi. 19. He went to heaven to receive his own acquired crown and glory, *John* xvii. 5. to finish that part of his mediatorial work, which could not be done on earth, and make intercession for his people; to demonstrate the fulness of his satisfaction; to take possession of heaven for his people, and prepare mansions for them, and to send down the Comforter, which was to be the first fruits of his intercession, *John* xvi. 7.

2. Upon his ascension into heaven Christ is enthroned at the right hand of the Father. His being said to sit there imports absolute rest and cessation from all farther troubles and sufferings, and an advancement to the highest personal dignity and sovereign power.

3. That angels, authorities and powers are all made subject to Christ Jesus, *all power in heaven and earth*, to command, to give law, issue orders, and pronounce a final sentence, is committed to Jesus, God-man, which his enemies will find to their everlasting sorrow and confusion, but his servants to their eternal joy and satisfaction.

#### C H A P. IV.

*The work of a Christian is twofold, doing the will of God, and suffering his pleasure. This chapter directs us in both. The duties we are here exhorted to employ our selves in are the mortification of sin, living to God, sobriety, prayer, charity hospitality, and the best improvement of our talents, which the apostle presseth upon Christians from the consideration of the time they have lost in their sins, and the approaching end of all things, ver. 1.—12. The directions for sufferings are, that we should not be surprized at them, but rejoice in them, only take care not to suffer as evil doers. He intimates, that their trials were near at hand, that their souls were in danger as well as their bodies, and the best way to preserve their souls, is to commit them to God in well doing.*

1. **F**ORasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

The apostle here draws a new inference from the consideration of Christ's sufferings. As he had before made use of it to persuade to patience in suffering, so here to mortification of sin. The antecedent or supposition is, *that Christ hath suffered* for us in the flesh, or in his human nature. The consequent or inference is, arm and fortify yourselves likewise with the same mind, courage and resolution. The word flesh in the former part of the verse signifies Christ's human nature, but in the latter part it signifies man's corrupt nature. So the sense is, as Christ suffered in his human nature, do you, according to your baptismal vow and profession, make your corrupt nature suffer, by putting to death the body of sin, by self-denial and mortification; for if you do thus suffer in the flesh, or make the flesh suffer, you will be conformable to Christ in his death and resurrection, and will *cease from sin*.

Learn, 1. Some of the strongest and best arguments against all sorts of sin are taken from the sufferings of Christ. All sympathy and tenderness for Christ as a sufferer is lost if you do not put away sin. He died to destroy it; and though he could cheerfully submit to the worst sufferings, yet he could never submit to the least sin.

2. The beginning of all true mortification lies in the mind. Not in penances and hardships upon the body. The mind of man is carnal, full of enmity; the understanding is darkened, being alienated from the life of God, *Eph.* iv. 18. Man is not a sincere creature, but partial, blind and wicked till he be renewed and sanctified by the regenerating grace of God.

2. That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

Here the apostle explains what he means by being dead to sin, and ceasing from sin. Negatively, a Christian ought *no longer to live the rest of his time in the flesh* to the sinful lusts and corrupt desires of carnal wicked men; but, positively, he ought to conform himself to the revealed will of the holy God.

Learn, 1. The lusts of men are the springs of all their wickedness, *Jam.* i. 13. Let occasional temptations be what they will, they could not prevail, were it not for mens own corruptions.

2. All good Christians make the will of God, not their own lusts or desires, the rule of their lives and actions.

3. True conversion makes a marvellous change in the heart and life of every one that partakes of it. It brings a man off from all his old, fashionable, and delightful lusts, and from the common ways and vices of the world, to the will of God. It alters the mind, judgment, affection, way, and conversation of every one that hath experienced it.

3. For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

Here the apostle argues from equity. It is but just, equal and reasonable that as you have hitherto all the former part of your life served sin and Satan, so you should now serve the living God. Though these were Jews to whom the apostle writes, yet living among the Gentiles, they had learned their way.

Learn, 1. When a man is truly converted, it is very grievous to him to think how the time past of his life has been spent; the hazard he hath run so many years; the mischief he hath done to others; the dishonour done to God, and the loss he hath sustained, are very afflicting to him.

2. Whilst the will of man is un sanctified and corrupt, he walks continually in wicked ways; he makes them his choice and delight, his work and business, and he makes a bad condition daily worse and worse.

3. One sin allowed draws on another. Here are six named, and they have a connexion and dependence one upon another. 1. *Lasciviousness*, or wantonness, expressed in looks, gesture, or behaviour, *Rom.* xiii. 13. 2. *Lusts*, acts of lewdness, such as whoredom and adultery. 3. *Excess of wine*, though short of drunkenness, an immoderate use of it, to the prejudice of health or business is here condemned. 4. *Revellings*, or luxurious feasting, too frequent, too full, or too expensive. 5. *Banquetings*, by which is meant gluttony, or excess in eating. 6. *Abominable idolatry*, the idol worship of the Gentiles was attended with lewdness, drunkenness, gluttony, and all sorts of brutality and cruelty; and these Jews living long amongst them were some of them at least debauched and corrupted by such practices.

4. It is a Christian's duty not only to abstain from what is grossly wicked, but also from those things that are generally the occasions of sin, or carry the appearance of evil. *Excess of wine* and immoderate feasting is forbid as well as lust and idolatry.

4. Wherein they think it strange, that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:

Here you have the visible change wrought in those, who in the foregoing verse were represented as having been, in the former part of their life, very wicked. They no longer run on in the same courses, or with the same companions, as they used to do. Hereupon observe the carriage of their wicked acquaintance towards them.

1. They think it strange, they are surprized and wonder at it, as at something new and unusual, that their old friends should be so much altered, and not run with as much violence as they used to do to the same *excess of riot*, to the same sordid excesses and luxury which before they had greedily and madly followed.

2. *They speak evil of them.* Their surprize carries them to blasphemy. They speak evil of their persons, of their way, their religion, and their God.

Learn, 1. They that are once really converted, will not return to their former course of life, though never so much tempted by the frowns or flatteries of others to do so. Neither persuasions nor reproach will prevail with them to be or to do as they were wont to do.



2. The temper and behaviour of true Christians seems very strange to ungodly men. That they should despise that which every one else is fond of. That they should believe many things which to others seem incredible; that they should delight in what is irksome and tedious, and be zealous where they have no visible interest to serve, and that they should depend so much upon hope.

3. The best actions of religious people cannot escape the censures and slanders of them that are irreligious. Those actions which cost a good man the most pains, hazard and self-denial shall be most censured by the uncharitable and ill-natured world, they will speak evil of good people, though they themselves reap the fruits of their charity, piety and goodness.

5. Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

For the comfort of the servants of God, it is here added, that all wicked people, especially those that speak evil of them that are not as bad as themselves, shall give an account, and be put to give a reason of their behaviour, to him that is ready to judge; that is, both able, and duly authorized, and that will ere long judge and pass sentence upon all that shall then be found alive, and all such as being dead shall then be raised again, *James* v. 8, 9. *2 Peter* iii. 9.

Learn, That the malignant world shall, in a little time, give an account to the great God of all their evil speeches against his people, *Jud.* 14, 15. They will soon be called to a sad account for all their curses, their foolish jests, their slanders and falsehoods uttered against the faithful people of God.

6. For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

Some understand this difficult place thus: *For this cause was the gospel preached* to all the faithful of old, that are now dead in Christ, that thereby they might be taught and encouraged, to bear the unrighteous judgments and persecutions which the rage of men did put upon them *in the flesh, but might live in the Spirit unto God.* Others take the expression, *that they might be judged according to men in the flesh.* In a spiritual sense thus: The gospel was preached to them, to judge them, condemn them, and reprove them for the corruption of their natures, and the viciousness of their lives; which they lived after the manner of the heathen, or the mere natural man; and that having thus mortified their sins, they might live according to God, a new and spiritual life. Take it thus; and thence,

Learn, 1. That the mortifying our sins, and living to God, are the expected effects of the gospel preached unto us.

2. That God will certainly reckon with all those that have had the gospel preached unto them, but without these good effects produced by it: God is ready to judge all those that have received his gospel in vain.

3. It is no matter how we are *judged according to men in the flesh, if we do but live according to God in the spirit.*

7. But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

We have here an awful position or doctrine, and an inference drawn from it. The position is, that the *end of all things is at hand.* The miserable destruction of the Jewish church and nation, foretold by our Saviour, is now very near; consequently the time of their persecution, and your sufferings is but very short. Your own life, and that of your enemies will soon come to their utmost period. Nay, the world it self will not continue very long. The conflagration will put an end to it; and all things must be swallowed up in an endless eternity. The inference from this is, *be ye therefore sober.* Let the frame and temper of your minds be grave, stayed and solid; and observe strict temperance and sobriety in the use of all worldly enjoyments. Do not suffer your selves to be caught with your former sins and temptations, *ver.* 3. *And watch unto prayer.* Take care that you be continually in a calm, sober disposition, fit for prayer; and that you be frequent in prayers, lest this end *come upon you unawares,* *Luke* xxi. 34. *Mat.* xxvi. 40, 41.

Learn, 1. The consideration of our approaching end is a powerful argument to make us sober in all worldly matters, and earnest in religious affairs.

2. They that would pray to purpose, must *watch unto prayer.* They must watch over their own spirits, and watch all fit opportunities, and do their duty in the best manner they can.

3. The right ordering of the body is of great use to promote the good of the soul. When the appetites and inclinations of the body are restrained and governed by God's word and true reason; and the interests of the body are submitted to the interests and necessities of the soul: Then it is not the soul's enemy, but its friend and helper.

8. And above all things have fervent charity among your selves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

Here is a noble rule in Christianity. The grace recommended, is *charity among your selves.* Christians ought to love one another; which implies an affection to their persons, a desire of their welfare, and an hearty endeavour to promote it. The degree of this mutual affection is, it must not be cold, but fervent, that is, sincere, strong and lasting. This sort of earnest affection is recommended *above all things;* which shews the importance of it, *Col.* iii. 14. It is greater than faith or hope, *1 Cor.* xiii. 13. One excellent effect of it is, that it will *cover a multitude of sins.*

Learn, 1. There ought to be in all Christians a more fervent charity towards one another, than towards other men. Have *charity among your selves.* He does not say for pagans, for idolaters, or for apostates, *but among your selves.* *Let brotherly love continue,* *Heb.* xiii. 1. There is a special relation between all sincere Christians, and a particular amiableness and good in them, which requires special affection.

It is not enough for Christians not to bear malice, or to have common respect for one another, they must intensely and fervently love each other.

3. It is the property of true charity *to cover a multitude of sins.* It inclines people to forgive and forget offences against themselves; to cover and conceal the sins of others, rather than aggravate them and spread them abroad. It teaches us to love them that are but weak, and that have been guilty of many evil things before their conversion; and it prepares for mercy at the hand of God, who hath promised to forgive them that forgive others, *Mat.* vi. 15.

9. Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

The hospitality here required, is a free and kind entertainment of strangers and travellers. The proper object of a Christian's hospitality are one another. The nearness of their relation, and the necessity of their condition in those times of persecution and distress, did oblige Christians to be hospitable one to another. Sometimes Christians were spoiled of all they had, and were driven away to distant countries for safety. In this case they must starve, if their fellow-Christians would not receive them. Therefore it was a wise and necessary rule which the apostle here laid down. It is elsewhere commanded, *Heb.* xiii. 1. *Rom.* xii. 13. The manner of performing this duty, is this; it must be done in an easy, kind, handsome manner, *without grudging,* or grumbling at the expence or trouble.

Learn, 1. That Christians ought not only to be charitable, but hospitable one to another.

2. Whatever a Christian does by way of charity, or of hospitality, he ought to do it cheerfully, and *without grudging.* Freely you have received, freely give.

10. As every man hath received the gift, *even so* minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

Here the apostle gives direction about the improvement of talents. The rule is, that whatever gift ordinary, or extraordinary; whatever power, ability, or capacity of doing good, is given to us, we should minister, or do service with the same *one to another;* accounting our selves not masters, but only *stewards of the manifold grace,* or the various gifts of God.

Learn, 1. Whatever ability we have of doing good, we must own it to be the gift of God, and ascribe it to his grace.

2. Whatever gifts we have received, we ought to look upon them as received for the use one of another. We must not assume them to our selves, or hide them in a napkin, but do service with them *one to another* in the best manner we are able,

3. In receiving and using the manifold gifts of God, we must look upon our selves as stewards only, and act accordingly. The talents we are intrusted with, are our Lord's goods, and must be employed as he directs. And it is required in a steward, that he be found faithful.

11. If any man speak, *let him speak* as oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ; to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

The apostle exemplifies his direction about gifts in two particulars, speaking and ministering. Concerning which, he gives these rules.

1. *If any man,* whether a minister in publick, or a Christian in private conference, do speak or teach, he must do it *as the oracles of God;* which directs us as to the matter of our speech. What Christians in private, or ministers in publick teach and speak, must be the pure word *and oracles of God.* As to the manner of speaking, it must be with that seriousness, reverence and solemnity that becomes those holy and divine oracles. 2. *If any man minister,* either as a deacon distributing the alms of the church, and taking care of the poor, or as a private person, by charitable gifts and contributions, *let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.* He that hath received plenty and ability from God, ought to minister plentifully, and according to his ability. These rules ought to be followed and practised



practised for this end ; *that God in all things*, in all your gifts, ministrations, and services may be glorified. *That others may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*, Mat. v. 16. *Through Jesus Christ*, who hath procured and given these gifts to men, Eph. iv. 8. and through whom alone, we and our services are accepted of God, Heb. xiii. 15. To which Jesus Christ be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Learn, 1. It is the duty of Christians in private, as well as ministers in publick, to speak to one another of the things of God, Mal. iii. 16. Eph. iv. 29. Psal. cxlv, 10, 11, 12.

2. It highly concerns all preachers of the gospel to keep close to the word of God, and to treat that word as becomes *the oracles of God*.

3. Christians must not only do the duties of their place, but they must do it with vigour, and according to *the best of their abilities*. The nature of a Christian's work, which is high work, and hard work ; the goodness and kindness of the Master, and the excellency of the reward, do all require, that our endeavours should be serious and vigorous ; and that whatever we are called to do for the honour of God, and the good of others, we should do it with all our might.

4. In all the duties and services of life, we should aim at the glory of God as our chief end ; all other views must be subservient to that, which would sanctify our common actions and affairs, 1 Cor. x. 31.

5. God is not glorified by any thing we do, if we do not offer it to him through the mediation and merits of Jesus Christ. *God in all things must be glorified through Jesus Christ*, who is the only way to the Father.

6. The apostles adoration of Jesus Christ, and ascribing unlimited and everlasting praise and dominion to him, proves, that Jesus Christ is the most high God over all, blessed for ever more. Amen.

12. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you : 13. But rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings ; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

The frequent repetition of counsel and comfort to Christians, considered as sufferers, in every chapter of this epistle, sheweth, that the greatest danger these new converts were in, arose from the persecutions to which their embracing Christianity did expose them. The credible behaviour of Christians under sufferings, is the most difficult part of their duty, but yet necessary both for the honour of Christ and their own comfort : And therefore the apostle having exhorted them in the former part of this chapter to the great duty of mortification, does here come to direct them in the necessary duty of patience under suffering. An unmortified spirit is very unfit to bear trials.

Observe, 1. The apostle's kind manner of address to these poor despised Christians. They were his beloved.

2. His advice to them, relating to their sufferings, which is, that they should not think them strange, nor be surpris'd at them, as if some unexpected event befel them ; for though they be sharp and fiery, yet they are designed only to try, not to ruin them ; to try their sincerity, strength, patience, and trust in God.

On the contrary, they ought rather to rejoice under their sufferings, because theirs may properly be called Christ's sufferings. They are of the same kind, and for the same cause that Christ suffered ; they make us conformable to him ; he suffers in them, and feels our infirmities ; and if we be partakers of his sufferings, we shall also be made *partakers of his glory* ; and shall meet him with exceeding joy at his great appearing to judge his enemies, and crown his faithful servants, 2 Thes. i. 7.

Learn, 1. True Christians do love and own the children of God in their lowest, and most distressing circumstances. The apostle owns these poor afflicted Christians. and calls them his beloved. True Christians never look more amiable one to another, than in their adversities.

2. There is no reason for Christians to think strange, or to wonder at the unkindnesses and persecutions of the world, because they are forewarned of them. Christ himself endured them ; and the forsaking all, denying our selves, and bearing the cross, are the terms upon which Christ accepts of us to be his disciples.

3. Christians ought not only to be patient, but to rejoice in their sharpest and forest sufferings for Christ, because they are tokens of divine favour ; they promote the gospel, and prepare for glory. They that rejoice in their sufferings for Christ, shall eternally triumph and rejoice with him in glory.

14. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye ; for the spirit of glory, and of God resteth upon you : on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

From the fiery trial, the apostle descends to a lower degree of persecution ; that of the tongue by slander and reproach. He sup-

poseth this sort of suffering would fall to their lot : They would be reviled, evil spoken of, and slandered for the name or sake of Christ. In such case he asserts, *happy are ye*. The reason of which is, because ye have the Spirit of God with you to fortify and comfort you ; and the Spirit of God is also the Spirit of glory, that will carry you through all, and bring you off gloriously, and will prepare and seal you up for eternal glory. This glorious Spirit *resteth upon you*, resideth with you, dwelleth in you, supporteth you, and is pleased with you ; and is not this a mighty happiness ? By your patience and fortitude in suffering, by your dependence upon the promises of God, and adhering to the word which the holy Spirit hath revealed, *he is on your part glorified* ; but by the contempt and reproaches cast upon you *the Spirit itself* is evil-spoken of, and blasphemed.

Learn, 1. The best men, and the best things do usually meet with reproaches in the world. Jesus Christ and his followers, the Spirit of God, and the gospel, all are evil-spoken of.

2. The happiness of good people does not only consist with, but even flow from their afflictions. *Happy are ye*.

3. That man that hath the Spirit of God resting upon him, cannot be miserable, let his afflictions be never so great. *Happy are ye ; for the Spirit of God*, &c.

4. The blasphemies and reproaches which evil men cast upon good people, are taken by the Spirit of God as cast upon himself. *On their part he is evil spoken of*.

5. When good people are vilified *for the name of Christ*, his holy Spirit is glorified in them.

15. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil-doer, or a busy-body in other mens matters. 16. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed ; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

One would think such a caution as this needless to such an excellent set of Christians as these were. But their enemies did charge them with these and other foul crimes : Therefore the apostle, when he was settling the rules of the Christian religion, thought these cautions necessary, forbidding to every one of them, to hurt the life, or the estate and property of any one, or to do any sort of evil, or without call and necessity to play the *bishop in another man's charge*, or busy one's self in other mens matters. To this caution he adds a direction, *that if any man suffer for the cause of Christianity*, and with a patient Christian spirit, he ought not to account it a shame, but an honour to him ; and ought to glorify God who hath thus dignified him.

Learn, 1. The best of men need to be warned against the worst of sins.

2. There is a very little comfort in sufferings, when we bring them upon our selves by our own sin and folly. It is not the suffering, but the cause makes the martyr.

3. We have reason to thank God for the honour, if he calls us out to suffer for his truth and gospel ; for any of the doctrines or duties of Christianity.

17. For the time is come that judgment must be begin at the house of God : and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God ?

The usual method of providence hath been this : When God brings great calamities and sore judgments upon whole nations, he generally begins with his own people, Isa. x. 12. Jer. xxv. 29. Ezek. ix. 6. Such a time of universal calamity is now at hand, which was foretold by our Saviour, Mat. xxiv. 9, 10. This renders all the foregoing exhortations to patience necessary for you. And you have two considerations to support you. 1. That these judgments will but begin with you that are God's house and family, and will soon be over : Your trials and corrections will not last long. 2. Your troubles will be but light and short in comparison of what shall befal the wicked world ; your own countrymen the Jews, and the infidels and idolatrous people among which you live. *What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God ?*

Learn, 1. The best of God's servants, his own household, have so much amiss in them, as renders it fit and necessary that God should sometimes correct and punish them with his judgments. *Judgment begins at the house of God*.

2. They that are the family of God, have their worst things in this life. Their worst condition is tolerable, and will soon be over.

3. Such persons or societies of men as *disobey the gospel of God*, are not of his church and household ; though possibly they may make the loudest pretensions to it. The apostle distinguisheth the disobedient from the house of God.

4. The sufferings of good people in this life, are demonstrations of the unspeakable torments that are coming upon the disobedient and unbelieving. *What shall the end be of those that obey not the gospel ?* Who can express or say how dreadful their end will be ?

18. And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ?

This whole verse is taken from Prov. xi. 31. *Behold the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth ; how much more the wicked and*



*the sinner?* This the LXX translate exactly as the apostles here quotes them: Whence we may learn, 1. That the grievous sufferings of good people in this world are sad presages of much heavier judgments coming upon impenitent sinners. But if we take the salvation here in the highest sense, then we may learn, 2. That it is as much as the best can do to secure the salvation of their souls; there are so many sufferings, temptations, and difficulties to be overcome; so many sins to be mortified; the gate is so strait, and the way so narrow, that it is as much as the righteous can do to be saved. Let the absolute necessity of salvation balance the difficulty of it. Consider, your difficulties are greatest at first; God offers his grace and help; the contest will not last long: Be but faithful to the death, *and God will give you the crown of life*, Rev. ii. 10. 3. The ungodly and the sinner are unquestionably in a state of damnation. *Where shall they appear?* How will they stand before their judge? Where can they shew their heads? *If the righteous scarcely be saved*, the wicked must certainly perish.

19. Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Here the apostle finisheth his discourse concerning sufferings, and gives this general advice: *Let them that suffer according to the will of God*, look chiefly to the safety of their souls, which are put into hazard by affliction, and cannot be kept secure, otherwise than by committing them to God, who will undertake the charge, if we commit them to him in well-doing; for he is their creator, and hath, out of mere grace made many kind promises to them of eternal salvation, in which he will shew himself faithful and true.

Learn, 1. That all the sufferings that befall good people, come upon them according to the will of God.

2. It is the duty of Christians, in all their distresses, to look more to the keeping of their souls, than to the preserving of their bodies. The soul is of greatest value, and yet in most danger. If suffering from without, raise uneasiness, vexation, and other sinful and tormenting passions within, the soul is then the greatest sufferer. If the soul be not well kept, persecution will drive people to apostasy, *Psal. cxxv. 3.*

3. The only way to keep the soul well, is to commit it to God in well-doing. Commit your souls to God by solemn dedication, prayer, and patient perseverance in well-doing, *Rom. ii. 7.*

4. Good people, when they are in affliction, have great encouragement to commit their souls to God, because he is their creator, and faithful in all his promises.

## C H A P. V.

*In which the apostle gives particular directions, first to the elders, how to behave themselves towards their flock, in the four first verses; then to the younger, to be obedient and humble, and to cast their care upon God, in the three next verses. From thence to the end he exhorts all to sobriety, watchfulness against temptations, and steadfastness in the faith, praying earnestly for them; and so concludes his epistle with a solemn doxology, mutual salutations, and his apostolical benediction.*

1. **T**HE elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed.

Here we may observe, 1. The persons to whom this exhortation is given. To the presbyters, pastors, and spiritual guides of the church; elders by office, rather than by age, ministers of those churches to whom he wrote this epistle. 2. The person who gives this exhortation, the apostle Peter. *I exhort*; and to give force to this exhortation, he tells them he was their sym-presbyter or fellow-elder; and so puts nothing upon them but what he was ready to perform himself. He was also a witness of the sufferings of Christ, being with him in the garden, attending him to the palace of the high-priest, and very likely was a spectator of his suffering upon the cross, at a distance among the crowd, *Acts. iii. 15.* He adds, that he was also a partaker of the glory that was in some degree revealed at the transfiguration, *Mat. xvii. 1, 2, 3.* and shall be completely enjoyed at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Learn, 1. They whose office it is to each others, ought carefully to study their own duty, as well as teach the people theirs.

2. How different the spirit and behaviour of Peter was from that of his pretended successors. He does not command and domineer, but exhort. He does not claim sovereignty over all pastors and churches, nor stile himself prince of the apostles, vicar of Christ, or head of the church, but values himself upon being an elder. All the apostles were elders, though every elder was not an apostle.

3. It was the peculiar honour of Peter, and a few more, to be the witnesses of Christ's sufferings; but it is the privilege of all true Christians to be partakers of the glory that shall be revealed.

2. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3. Neither as being lord over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

Here you have the pastors duty described, and the manner how that duty ought to be performed. The pastoral duty is threefold. 1. *To feed the flock*, by preaching to them the sincere word of God, and ruling them according to such directions and discipline as the word of God prescribes. Both which are implied in this expression, *feed the flock.* 2. The pastors of the church must *take the oversight thereof.* The elders are exhorted to do the office of bishops, as the word signifies, by personal care and vigilance over all the flock committed to their charge. 3. They must be *examples to the flock*, and practise that holiness, self-denial, mortification, and all other Christian duties which they preach and recommend to their people.

These duties must be performed not by constraint, not because you must do them, not from compulsion of the civil power, or constraint for fear of shame, but from a willing mind that takes pleasure in the work. *Not for filthy lucre*, or any emoluments and profits attending the place where you reside, or any perquisite belonging to the office, *but of a ready mind*, regarding the flock more than the fleece, sincerely and cheerfully endeavouring to serve the church of God. Neither as being *Lord's over God's heritage*, tyrannizing over them by compulsion and coercive force, or imposing unscriptural and human inventions upon them, instead of necessary duty, *Mat. xx. 25, 26. 2 Cor. i. 24.*

Learn, 1. The eminent dignity of the church of God, and all the true members of it. These poor, dispersed, suffering Christians were the flock of God. The rest of the world is a brutal herd. These are an orderly flock redeemed to God by the great Shepherd, living in holy love and communion one with another, according to the will of God. They are also dignified with the title of God's heritage, or clergy. His peculiar lot chosen out of the common multitude for his own people, to enjoy his special favour, and to do him special service. The word is never restrained in the New Testament to the ministers of religion only.

2. The pastors of the church ought to consider their people as the flock of God, as God's heritage, and treat them accordingly. They are not theirs to be lorded over at pleasure; but they are God's people, and should be treated with love, meekness and tenderness for the sake of him to whom they belong.

3. Those ministers that are either driven to the work by necessity, or drawn to it by filthy lucre, can never perform their duty as they ought, because they do not do it willingly, *and with a ready mind.*

4. The best way a minister can take to engage the respect of a people, is to discharge his own duty among them in the best manner that he can, and to be a constant example to them of all that is good.

4. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

In opposition to that filthy lucre which many proposed to themselves as their principal motive in their undertaking and discharge of the pastoral office, the apostle sets before them the crown of glory designed by the great Shepherd Jesus Christ, for all his faithful ministers.

Learn, 1. That Jesus Christ is the chief shepherd of the whole flock and heritage of God. He bought them, and ruleth them; he defendeth and saves them for ever. He is also the chief shepherd over all inferior shepherds; they derive their authority from him, act in his name, and are accountable to him at last.

2. This chief Shepherd will appear to judge all ministers and under-shepherds, to call them to account, whether they have faithfully discharged their work both publicly and privately, according to the foregoing directions.

3. They that are found to have done their duty, shall have what is infinitely better than temporal gain; they shall receive from the grand shepherd an high degree of everlasting glory, *a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

5. Likewise ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder: yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble.

Having settled and explained the duty of the pastors, or spiritual guides of the church, he comes now to instruct the flock how to behave themselves to their ministers, and to one another; he calls them *the younger*, as being generally younger than their grave pastors, and to put them in mind of their inferiority, the term, *younger*, being used by our Saviour to signify an inferior, *Luke xxii. 26.* he exhorteth those that are younger, and inferior, to submit themselves to the elder, to give due respect and reverence to their persons, and to yield to their admonitions, reproof, and authority, enjoining and commanding what the word of God requires, *Heb. xiii. 17.* As to one another, the rule is, that they should all be subject one to another, so far as to receive the reproof and counsels one of another, and be ready to bear one another's burdens, and perform all the offices of friendship and charity one to another; and particular persons should submit to the directions of the whole society, *Eph. v. 21. Jam. v. 16.* These duties of submission to superiors in age or office, and subjection to one another, being contrary to the proud nature, and selfish interests of men, he advises them to be clothed with humility; let



let your minds, behaviour, garb, and whole frame *be adorned with humility*, as the most beautiful habit you can wear ; this will render obedience and duty easy and pleasant ; but if you be disobedient and proud, God will set himself to oppose and crush you ; for *he resisteth the proud*, when he *giveth grace to the humble*.

Learn, 1. Humility is the great preserver of peace and order in all Christian churches and societies, consequently, pride is the great disturber of them, and the cause of most dissensions and breaches in the church.

2. There is a mutual opposition *between God and the proud*, so the word signifies ; they war against him, and he scorneth them ; *he resisteth the proud*, because they are like the devil, enemies to himself, and to his kingdom among men, *Prov. iii. 34.*

3. Where God *giveth grace to be humble*, he will give more *grace*, more wisdom, faith, holiness, and humility.

6. Humble your selves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time :

Since God *resisteth the proud*, but *giveth grace to the humble*, therefore *humble yourselves*, not only one to another, but to the great God, whose judgments are coming upon the world, and *must begin at the house of God*, chap. iv. 17. his *hand* is almighty, and can easily pull you down, if you be proud, or exalt you, if you be humble, and will certainly do it, either in this life, if he see it best for you, or at the day of general retribution.

Learn, 1. The consideration of the omnipotent hand of God, should make us humble and submissive to him in all that he brings upon us.

2. *Humbling ourselves to God under his hand*, is the next way to deliverance and exaltation ; patience under his chastisements, submission to his pleasure, repentance, prayer, and hope in his mercy, will engage his help and release in due time, *James iv. 7. 10.*

7. Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you.

The apostle knowing that these Christians were already under very hard circumstances, does rightly suppose, that what he had foretold of greater hardships yet a coming, might excite in them abundance of care and fear about the event of these difficulties, what the issue of them would be to themselves, their families, and the church of God ; foreseeing this anxious care would be a heavy burden, and a sore temptation, he gives them the best advice, and supports it with a strong argument ; his advice is, to *cast all their care*, or, *all care of themselves, upon God* ; throw your cares, which are so cutting and distracting, that wound your souls, and pierce your hearts, upon the wise and gracious providence of God, trust in him with a firm, composed mind, *for he careth for you* ; he is willing to release you of *your care*, and take the care of you upon himself ; he will either avert what you fear, or support you under it ; he will order all events to you, so as shall convince you of his paternal love and tenderness toward you ; and all shall be so ordered, that no hurt, but good, shall come unto you, *Matt. vi. 25. Psalm lxxxiv. 11. Rom. viii. 28.*

Learn, 1. The best of Christians are apt to labour under the burden of anxious, and excessive care ; the apostle calls it, *all your care* ; intimating, that the cares of Christians are various, and of more sorts than one ; personal cares, family cares, cares for the present, and cares for the future ; for themselves, for others, for the church.

2. The cares even of good people are very burdensome, and, too often, very sinful ; when they arise from unbelief and diffidence, when they torture and distract the mind, unfit us for the duties of our place, and hinder our delightful service of God, they are very criminal.

3. The best remedy against immoderate care, is to *cast our care upon God*, and resign every event to his wise and gracious determination : A firm belief of the rectitude of the divine will and counsels, calms the spirit of man : *We ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done*, *Acts xxi. 14.*

8. Be sober, be vigilant ; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. 9. Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

Here the apostle does three things : 1. He shews them their danger from an enemy more cruel and restless than even the worst of men, whom he describes, (1.) By his characters and names ; he is an *adversary*, that *adversary of yours* ; not a common *adversary*, but an enemy that impleads you, and litigates against you in your grand depending cause, and aims at your very souls. 2. *The devil, the grand accuser of all the brethren* ; this title is derived from a word which signifies to strike through, or to stab ; he would strike malignity into our natures, and poison into our souls ; if he could have struck these people with passion and murmuring in their sufferings, perhaps, he might draw them to apostasy and ruin. 3. He is a *roaring lion*, hungry, fierce, strong, and cruel ; the fierce and greedy pursuer of souls. (2.) By his business ; *he walks about, seeking whom he may devour* ; his whole design is to *devour* and de-

stroy souls ; to that end he is unwearied and restless in his malicious endeavours ; for he always, night and day, goes about studying and contriving whom he may ensnare to their eternal ruin. 2. Our duty inferred from hence, is, 1. *To be sober*, and to govern both the outward and the inward man by the rules of temperance, modesty, and mortification. 2. *To be vigilant* ; not secure, or careless, but rather suspicious of constant danger from this spiritual enemy, and, under that apprehension, to be watchful and diligent to prevent his designs, and save our souls. 3. *To resist him stedfast in the faith* ; it was *the faith* of these people that Satan aimed at ; if he could overturn their faith, and draw them into apostasy, then he knew he should gain his point, and ruin their souls ; therefore, to destroy their faith, he raises bitter persecutions, and sets the grand potentates of the world against them ; this strong trial and temptation they must *resist*, by being well grounded, resolute, and *stedfast in the faith* ; to encourage them to this, 3. The apostle tells them, that their care was not singular, for they *knew that the like afflictions* befel their *brethren* in all parts of *the world*, and that all the people of God were their fellow-soldiers in this warfare.

Learn, 1. All the great persecutions that ever were in the world, were raised, spirited up, and conducted by *the devil* ; he is the grand persecutor, as well as *the deceiver, and accuser of the brethren* ; men are his willing, spiteful instruments, but he is the chief *adversary* that wars against Christ, and his people, *Gen. iii. 15. Rev. xiii. 12.*

2. The design of Satan in raising persecutions against the faithful servants of God, is to bring them to apostasy, by reason of their sufferings, and so to destroy their souls.

3. Sobriety and watchfulness are necessary virtues at all times, but especially in times of suffering and persecution ; you must moderate your affection to worldly things, or else Satan will soon overcome you.

4. If you would overcome Satan, either as a tempter, accuser, or persecutor, you must *resist him stedfast in the faith* ; if your faith give way you are gone ; therefore, *above all, take the shield of faith*, *Eph. vi. 16.*

5. The consideration of what others suffer, is proper to encourage us to bear our own share in any affliction ; *the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren.*

10. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

We come now to the conclusion of this epistle, which the apostle begins with a most weighty prayer, which he addresseth to God as *the God of all grace*, the author and finisher of every heavenly gift and quality, acknowledging, on their behalf, that God had already *called them* to be partakers of that *eternal glory*, which, being his own, he had promised and settled upon them, through the merit and intercession of *Jesus Christ*. 2. You may observe what he prays for on their account ; not that they might be excused from sufferings, but that their sufferings might be moderate and short, and, *after they had suffered a while*, that God would restore them to a settled and peaceable condition, and *perfect* his work in them ; that he would *stablish* them against wavering, either in faith, or duty ; that he would *strengthen* them that are weak, and *settle* them upon Christ the foundation, so firmly, that their union with him might be indissoluble and everlasting.

Learn, 1. That *all grace* is from God ; it is he that restrains, converts, comforteth, and saveth men by his *grace*.

2. All that are *called* into a state of *grace*, are *called* to partake of *eternal glory* and happiness.

3. Those that are *called* to be heirs of eternal life, through Jesus Christ, must, nevertheless, *suffer* in this world, but their sufferings will be but for *a little while*.

4. The *perfecting, stablishing, strengthening, and settling* of good people in *grace*, and their perseverance therein, is so difficult a work, that only *the God of all grace* can accomplish it ; and therefore he is earnestly to be sought unto, by continual prayer, and dependence upon his promises.

11. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

From this doxology we may learn, that they that have obtained *grace* from *the God of all grace*, should, and will, ascribe *glory, dominion, and power to him for ever and ever.*

12. By Silvanus a faithful brother unto you (as I suppose) I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying, that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.

Here the apostle does, 1. Recapitulate the design of his writing this epistle to them, which was, (1.) *To testify*, and, in the strongest terms, to assure them, that the doctrine of salvation, which he had explained, and they had embraced, was the true account of the *grace of God*, foretold by the prophets, and published by Jesus Christ. (2.) *To exhort* them earnestly, that, as they had embraced the gospel, they would continue *steadfast* in it, notwithstanding



standing the arts of seducers, or the persecutions of enemies. 2. He recommends Silvanus, the person by whom he sent them this brief epistle, as a brother that he esteemed faithful and friendly to them, and hoped they would account him so, though he was a minister of the uncircumcision.

Learn, 1. That an honourable esteem of the ministers of religion, tends much to the success of their labours; when we are convinced they are faithful, we shall profit more by their ministerial services; the prejudices that some of these Jews might have against Silvanus, as a minister of the Gentiles, would soon wear off, when they were once convinced that he was a *faithful brother*.

2. The main thing that ministers ought to aim at in their labours, is to convince their people of the certainty and excellency of the Christian religion; this the apostles did *exhort and testify* with all their might.

3. A firm persuasion that we are in the true way to heaven, will be the best motive to stand fast, and persevere therein.

13. The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you, and so doth Marcus my son.

St. Peter being at Babylon in Assyria, when he wrote this epistle (whither he travelled, as the apostle of the circumcision, to visit that church, which was the chief of the dispersion) sends the saluta-

tion of that church to the other churches to whom he wrote, telling them, that God had *elected* or chosen the Christians at Babylon out of the world to be his church, and to partake of eternal salvation, through Christ Jesus, *together with them*, and all other faithful Christians, chap. i. 2. In this salutation he particularly joins Mark the evangelist, who was then with him, and who was his son, in a spiritual sense, being begotten by him to Christianity.

Learn, That all the churches of Jesus Christ ought to have a most affectionate concern one for another; they should love, and pray for, and be as helpful one to another, as they possibly can.

14. Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

He exhorts them to fervent love and charity one towards another, and to express this by giving *the kiss of peace*, according to the common custom of those times and countries, and so concludes with a benediction, which he confines to those only *that are in Christ Jesus*, united to him by faith, and sound members of his mystical body: The blessing he pronounceth upon these is *peace*, by which he means all necessary good, all manner of prosperity; to this he adds his *amen*, in token of his earnest desire, and undoubted expectation, that the blessing of *peace* would be the portion of all the faithful.



A N

# E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

## Second Epistle General of P E T E R, With Practical Observations.

The penman of this epistle appears plainly to be the same who wrote the foregoing; and whatsoever difference some learned men apprehend they discern in the style of this epistle from that of the former, this cannot be a sufficient argument to assert, that it was written by Simeon, who succeeded the apostle James in the church at Jerusalem, inasmuch as he who wrote this epistle calls himself Simon Peter, and an apostle, ver. 1. and says, that he was one of the three apostles that were present at Christ's transfiguration, ver. 18. and says expressly, that he had written a former epistle to them, chap. iii. 1. and the design of this second epistle is the same with that of the former, as is evident from the first verse of the third chapter; whence observe, that, in the things of God, we have need of precept upon precept, and line upon line, and all little enough to keep it in remembrance; and yet these are the things which should be most faithfully recorded, and frequently remembered by us.

### C H A P. I.

In this chapter we have, 1. An introduction, or preface, making way for, and leading to, what is principally designed by the apostle, ver. 1.—4. 2. An exhortation to advance and improve in all Christian graces, ver. 5.—7. To enforce this exhortation, and engage them seriously and heartily to comply with it, he adds, 1. A representation of the very great advantage which will thereby accrue to them, ver. 8.—11. 2. A promise of the best assistance the apostle was able to give to facilitate and forward this good work, ver. 12.—15. 3. A declaration of the certain truth and divine original of the gospel of Christ, in the grace whereof they were exhorted to increase and persevere.

1. **S**IMON Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: 2. Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, 3. According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: 4. Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

The apostle Peter being moved by the holy Ghost to write once more to those who from among the Jews were turned to faith in Christ, begins this second epistle with an introduction, wherein the same persons are described, and the same blessings are desired, that are in the preface to his former letter; but there are some additions, or alterations, which ought to be taken notice of, in all the three parts of the introduction.

1. We have here a description of the person that wrote the epistle, by the name *Simon*, as well as *Peter*, and by the title of *servant*, as well as that of *apostle*; *Peter*, being in both epistles, seems to be the name most frequently used, and with which he may be thought to be best pleased, being given him by our Lord, upon his confessing *Jesus to be Christ, the Son of the living God*; and the very name signifying, and sealing that truth to be the fundamental article, the rock on which all must build; but the name *Simon*, though omitted in the former epistle, is mentioned in this, lest the total omission of that name, which was given him when he was circumcised, should make the Jewish believers, who were all zealous of the law, to become jealous of the apostle, as if he disclaimed and despised circumcision; he here styles himself *a servant* (as well as *an apostle*) of *Jesus Christ*; in this he may be allowed to glory, as David does, *Psal. cxvi. 16.* the service of Christ is the way to the highest honour, *John xii. 26.* Christ himself is *King of kings, and Lord of lords*; and he makes all his servants *kings and priests unto God*, *Rev. i. 6.* How great an honour is it to be the servants of this Master! This is what we cannot, without sin, be ashamed of: To triumph in being *Christ's servant*, is very proper for



for those who are engaging others to enter into, or abide in the service of Christ.

2. We have an account of the people to whom the epistle is written; they have been described in the former epistle, as *elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*; and here, as *having obtained precious faith in our Lord Jesus Christ*; for the faith here mentioned is vastly different from the false faith of the heretick, and the feigned faith of the hypocrite, and the fruitless faith of the formal professor (how orthodox soever he is) it is *the faith of God's elect*, Tit. i. 1. wrought by the Spirit of God in effectual calling. Observe, 1. True saving *faith* is a *precious* grace, and that not only as it is very uncommon, very scarce, even in the visible church, a very small number of true believers among a great multitude of visible professors, Matt. xxii. 14. but true *faith* is very excellent, and of very great use and advantage to those who have it; *the just lives by faith*, a truly divine, spiritual life; *faith* procures all the necessary supports and comforts of this excellent life; *faith* goes to Christ, and *buys the wine and milk*, Isa. lv. 1. that are the proper nourishment of the new creature; *faith* buys and brings home the tried gold, the heavenly treasure that does enrich; *faith* takes and puts on *the white raiment*, the royal robes that clothe and adorn, Rev. iii. 18. Observe, 2. *Faith* is alike precious in the private Christian, and in the apostle; it produces the same *precious* effects in the one, and in the other. *Faith* unites the weak believer to Christ, as really as it does the strong one, and purifies the heart of one as truly as of another; and every sincere believer is by his *faith* justified in the sight of God, and that from all sins, Acts xiii. 39. *Faith*, in whomsoever it is, takes hold of the same *precious* Saviour, and applies the same *precious* promises. 3. This *precious faith* is obtained of God. *Faith* is the gift of God, wrought by the Spirit, who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead. 4. The preciousness of *faith*, as well as our obtaining it, is through the righteousness of Christ. The satisfactory, meritorious righteousness and obedience of Christ gives *faith* all its value and preciousness: And the righteousness of such a person cannot but be of infinite value to those who by *faith* receive it. For, 1. This Jesus Christ is God, yea, our God, as it is in the original. He is truly God, an infinite being, who has wrought out this righteousness, and therefore it must be of infinite value. 2. *He is the Saviour of them that believe*, and, as such, he yielded this meritorious obedience; and therefore it is of such great benefit and advantage to them, because, as surety and saviour, he wrought out this righteousness in their stead.

3. We have the apostolical benediction, wherein he wishes for the multiplication and increase of the divine favour to them, and the advancement and growth of the work of *grace* in them, and that *peace* with God, and in their own consciences (which cannot be without *grace*) may abound in them; this is the very same benediction that is in the former epistle; but here he adds, 1. An account of the way and means whereby *grace and peace are multiplied*, it is *through the knowledge of God, and Jesus Christ*; this acknowledging and believing in *the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent*, is the great improvement of spiritual life, or it could not be the way to life eternal, John xvii. 3. We have, 2. The ground of the apostle's faith in asking, and of the Christian's hope in expecting the increase of *grace*; what we have already received, should encourage us to ask for more; he that has begun the work of *grace*, will perfect it. Observe, 1. The fountain of all spiritual blessings is the *divine power* of Jesus Christ, who could not discharge all the office of mediator, unless he was God as well as man. 2. *All things* that have any relation to, and influence upon the true spiritual life, the life and power of *godliness*, is from Jesus Christ, *in him all fulness dwells*, and it is from him we receive, *and grace for grace*, John i. 16. even all that is necessary for the preserving, improving, and perfecting of *grace and peace*, which are called here in this verse *godliness and life* (according to some expositors.) 3. *Knowledge of God*, and faith in him, are the channel whereby all spiritual supports and comforts are conveyed to us; but then we must own and acknowledge God as the author of our effectual calling, for so he is here described; *him that has called us to glory and virtue*. Observe here, that the design of God in calling or converting men, is to bring them to *glory and virtue*, that is, *peace and grace*, as some understand it; but many prefer the marginal rendering, [ *by glory and virtue*; ] and so we have effectual calling set forth as the work of *the glory and virtue*, or *the glorious power of God*, which is described, Eph. i. 19. it is the glory of God's power to convert sinners; this is that *power and glory* of God which are *seen* and experienced in his *sanctuary*, Psalm lxiii. 2. this *power* or *virtue* is to be extolled by all *that are called out of darkness into marvellous light*, 1 Pet. ii. 9.

In the fourth verse the apostle goes on to encourage their faith and hope in looking for an increase of *grace and peace*, because the same *glory and virtue* are employed and evidenced in giving the promises of the gospel, that are exercised in our effectual calling. Observe, 1. The good things which the *promises* make over are *exceeding great*, pardon of sin is one of the blessings here intended, how great this is, all, who know any thing of the power of God's anger, will readily confess; and this is one of those promised favours, in bestowing whereof *the power of the Lord is great*, Numb. xiv. 17. to pardon sins that are numerous and heinous (every one of which deserves God's wrath and curse, and that for ever) is a wonderful

thing, and so called, Psalm cxix. 18. 2. The promised blessings of the gospel are very *precious*; as the great promise of the Old Testament was *the seed of the woman* (the Messiah) Heb. xi. 39. so the great promise of the New Testament is *the holy Ghost*, Luke xxiv. 49. and how *precious* must the enlivening, enlightening, sanctifying Spirit be! 3. They who receive the *promises* of the gospel, *do partake of the divine nature*; these are *renewed in the spirit of their mind, after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness*; their hearts are fit for God, and his service; they have a divine temper and disposition of soul; though the law be *the ministration of death, and the letter killeth*, yet the gospel is *the ministration of life, and the Spirit quickeneth those who are naturally dead in trespasses and sins*. 4. Those in whom the Spirit does work the divine nature, are freed from the bondage of *corruption*: They who are, by the Spirit of grace, *renewed in the spirit of their mind*, are translated into *the liberty of the children of God*: For it is *the world* in which *corruption* does reign: They who are *not of the Father, but of the world*, are under the power of sin: *The world lies in wickedness*, 1 John v. 19. And the dominion that sin has in the men of *the world*, is *through lust*; their desires are to it, and therefore it rules over them: The dominion sin has over us, is according to the delight we have in it.

5. And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; 6. And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; 7. And to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.

In these words the apostle comes to the chief thing intended in this epistle, to excite and engage them to advance in grace and holiness, they having already *obtained precious faith*, and been made *partakers of the divine nature*; this is a very good beginning, but it is not to be rested in, as if *we were already perfect*; the apostle had prayed that *grace and peace might be multiplied to them*, and now he exhorts them to press forward for the obtaining of more grace; we should, as we have opportunity, exhort those we pray for, and excite them to the use of all proper means to obtain what we desire God to bestow upon them; and they who will make any progress in religion, must be very diligent and industrious in their endeavours; without *giving all diligence*, there is no gaining any ground in the work of holiness; they who are slothful in the business of religion, will make nothing of it; we must *strive*, if we will *enter in at the strait gate*, Luke xiii. 24.

Here we cannot but observe how the believer's way is marked out step by step; first he must get *virtue*, by which some understand justice; and then the *knowledge, temperance, and patience* that follow, being joined with it, the apostle may be supposed to put them upon pressing after the four cardinal virtues, or the four elements that go to the making up of every virtue, or virtuous actions; but seeing it is a *faithful saying, and constantly to be asserted, that they who have faith, be careful to maintain good works*, Tit. iii. 8. by *virtue* here, we may understand strength and courage, without which the believer cannot stand up for *good works*, by abounding and excelling in them; *the righteous must be bold as a lion*, Prov. xxviii. 1. a cowardly Christian, who is afraid, or ashamed to profess the doctrines, or practise the duties of the gospel, must expect that Christ will be ashamed of him another day; let not your hearts fail you in the evil day, but shew yourselves valiant in standing against all opposition, and resisting every enemy, world, flesh, devil, yea, and death too; we have need of *virtue* while we live, and it will be of excellent use when we come to die.

2. The believer must *add knowledge* to his *virtue*, prudence to his courage; there is a *knowledge* of God's name, which must go before our *faith*, Psalm ix. 10. and we cannot approve of the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God, till we know it; but there are proper circumstances for duty, which must be known, and observed; we must use the appointed means, and observe *the accepted time*; Christian prudence regards the persons we have to do with, and the place and company we are in; every believer must labour after that *knowledge and wisdom that is profitable to direct*, both as to the proper method and order wherein all Christian duties are to be performed, and as to the way and manner of performing them.

3. We must *add temperance* to our *knowledge*; we must be sober and moderate in our love to, and use of, the good things of this life; and if we have a right understanding and *knowledge* of outward comforts, we shall see their worth and usefulness are vastly inferior to that of spiritual mercies; bodily exercises, and bodily privileges, profit but little, and therefore are to be esteemed and used accordingly; the gospel teaches sobriety as well as honesty, Tit. ii. 12. we must be moderate in desiring and using the good things of natural life, such as meat, drink, clothes, sleep, recreations, credit, &c. an inordinate desire after these, is inconsistent with an earnest desire after God and Christ; and they who take more of these than is due, can neither render to God nor man what is due to them.

4. *Add to temperance, patience*; which must have its *perfect work*, or we cannot be *perfect, and entire, wanting nothing*, Jam. i. 4. for we are *born to trouble, and must, through many tribulations, enter into the kingdom of heaven*; and it is this *tribulation*, Rom.



v. 3. which *worketh patience*, that is, requires the exercise, and occasions the increase of this grace; whereby we bear all calamities and crosses with silence and submission, without murmuring against God, or complaining of him, but justifying him who lays all affliction upon us, owning that our sufferings are less than our sins deserve, and believing they are no more than we ourselves do need.

5. To *patience* we must add *godliness*, and this is the very thing which is produced by *patience*, for that *works experience*, Rom. v. 4. When Christians bear afflictions patiently, they get an experimental knowledge of the loving kindness of their heavenly Father, which he will not take from his children, even when he visits their iniquity with the rod, and their transgression with stripes, Psalm lxxxix. 32, 33. and hereby they are brought to the child-like fear, and reverential love, wherein true *godliness* does consist: To which,

6. We must add *brotherly-kindness*, a tender affection to all our fellow-Christians, who are children of the same Father, servants of the same Master, members of the same family, travellers to the same country, and heirs of the same inheritance, and therefore are to be loved with a pure heart fervently, with a love of complacency, as those who are peculiarly near and dear to us, in whom we take particular delight, Psalm xvi. 3.

7. *Charity*, or a love of good-will to all mankind, must be added to the love of delight which we have for those who are the children of God; God has made of one blood all nations, and all the children of men are partakers of the same human nature, and are all capable of the same mercies, and liable to the same afflictions, and therefore, though, upon a spiritual account, Christians are distinguished and dignified above those who are without Christ, yet are they to sympathize with others in their calamities, and relieve their necessities, and promote their welfare, both in body and soul, as they have opportunity; thus must all believers in Christ evidence that they are the children of God, who is good to all, but is especially good to Israel.

All the forementioned graces must be had, or we shall not be thoroughly furnished for all good works, for the duties of the first and second table, for active and passive obedience, and for those services wherein we are to imitate God, as well as for those wherein we only obey him.

8. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren, nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9. But he that lacketh these things, is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. 10. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: 11. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

To engage us to an industrious and unwearied pursuit of all the forementioned graces, the apostle sets forth the advantages that redound to all who successfully labour so as to get these things to be, and abound in them. This is proposed,

1. More generally, ver. 8. the having these things make not barren (or slothful) nor unfruitful; where, according to the style of the holy Ghost, we must understand a great deal more than is expressed; for when it is said concerning Ahaz, the vilest and most provoking of all the kings of Judah, that he did not right in the sight of the Lord, 2 Kings xvi. 2. we are to understand as much as it had been said, he did what was most offensive and abominable, as the following account of his life does shew; so when it is here said, that the being and abounding of all Christian graces in us will make neither unactive nor unfruitful, we are thereby to understand, that it will make very zealous and lively, vigorous and active, in all practical Christianity, and eminently fruitful in the works of righteousness; these will bring much glory to God, by bringing forth much fruit among men, being fruitful in knowledge, or the acknowledging of our Lord Jesus Christ, owning him to be their Lord, and evidencing themselves to be his servants, by their abounding in the work that he has given them to do; this is the necessary consequence of adding one grace to another; for where all Christian graces are in the heart, they improve and strengthen, encourage and cherish one another; so they all thrive and grow, as the apostle intimates in the beginning of ver. 8. and, wherever grace abounds, there will be an abounding in good works.

How desirable it is to be in such a case, the apostle evidenceth, ver. 9. where he sets forth how miserable it is to be without those quickening, fructifying graces; for he who hath not, or, though he pretends, or seems to have the forementioned graces, does not exercise and improve them, is blind; that is, as to spiritual and heavenly things, as the next words explain it; he cannot see far off; this present evil world he can see, and does dote upon, but has no discerning at all of the world to come, so as to be affected with the spiritual privileges, and heavenly blessings thereof; he that sees the excellencies of Christianity, must needs be diligent in endeavours after all those graces that are absolutely necessary for obtaining glory, honour, and immortality; but where these graces are not obtained, nor endeavoured after, men are not able to look forward to the

things that are but a very little way off in reality, though, in appearance, or in their apprehension, they are at a great distance, because they put them far away from them; and how wretched is their condition, who are thus blind, as to the awfully great things of the other world! Who cannot see any thing of the reality and certainty, the greatness and nearness, of the glorious rewards God will bestow on the righteous, and the dreadful punishment he will inflict on the ungodly!

But this is not all the misery of those who do not add to their faith, virtue, knowledge, &c. they are as unable to look backward as forward, their memories are slippery, and unable to retain what is past, as their sight is short, and unable to discern what is future; they forget that they have been baptized, and had the means, and been laid under the obligations to holiness of heart and life. By baptism we are engaged in a holy war against sin, and are solemnly bound to fight against flesh, world, and devil. Often call to mind, and seriously meditate on your solemn engagement to be the Lord's, and your peculiar advantages and encouragements to lay aside all filthiness of flesh and spirit.

2. The apostle proposes two particular advantages that will attend, or follow, upon diligence in the work of a Christian: 1. Stability in grace: 2. A triumphant entrance into glory: These he brings in by resuming his former exhortation, and laying it down in other words; for what, ver. 5. is expressed by giving diligence to add to faith, virtue, &c. is here expressed by giving diligence to make our calling and election sure; where we may observe, 1. It is the duty of believers to make their election sure, to clear it up to themselves, that they are the chosen of God. 2. The way to make sure their eternal election, is to make out their effectual calling; none can look into the book of God's eternal counsels and decrees, but in as much as whom God did predestinate, them he also called; if we can find we are effectually called, we may conclude we are chosen to salvation. 3. It requires a great deal of diligence and labour to make sure our calling and election; there must be a very close examination of ourselves, a very narrow search, and strict enquiry, whether we are thoroughly converted, our minds enlightened, our wills renewed, and our whole souls changed, as to the bent and inclination thereof; and to come to a fixed certainty in this, requires the utmost diligence, and cannot be attained, and kept, without divine assistance, as we may learn from Psalm cxxxix. 23. Rom. viii. 16.

But how great soever the labour is, do not think much of it, for great is the advantage you gain by it; for, 1. By this you will be kept from falling, and that at all times and seasons, even in those hours of temptation that shall be on the earth; when others shall fall into heinous and scandalous sin, these shall be enabled to walk circumspectly, and keep on in the way of their duty; and when many fall into errors, these shall be preserved sound in the faith, and stand perfect and compleat in all the will of God. 2. They who are diligent in the work of religion, shall have a triumphant entrance into glory; whilst of those few who get to heaven, some are scarcely saved, 1 Pet. iv. 18. with a great deal of difficulty, even as by fire, 1 Cor. iii. 15. these, who are growing in grace, and abounding in the work of the Lord, shall have an abundant entrance into the joy of their Lord, even that everlasting kingdom, where Christ reigns, and they shall reign with him for ever and ever.

12. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. 13. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance: 14. Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me. 15. Moreover, I will endeavour, that you may be able after my decease, to have these things always in remembrance.

The importance and advantage of progress and perseverance in grace and holiness, makes the apostle to be very diligent in doing the work of a minister of Christ, that he might thereby excite and assist them to be diligent in the duty of Christians: If ministers be negligent in their work, it can hardly be expected the people will be diligent in theirs; therefore St. Peter will not be negligent, that is, at no time or place, in no part of his work, to no part of his charge, but will be exemplarily and universally diligent, and that in the work of a remembrancer; this is the office of the best ministers, even the apostles themselves; they are the Lord's remembrancers, Isa. lxii. 6. they are especially bound to make mention of the promises, and put God in mind of his engagements to do good to his people; and they are the peoples remembrancers, making mention of God's precepts, and putting them in mind of the doctrines and duties of Christianity, that they may remember God's commandments to do them.

And this the apostle does, though some persons might think it needless, inasmuch as they already knew these things that he writes about, and were established in the very truth, that he does insist upon. Observe, 1. We need to be put in mind of what we do already know, to prevent our forgetting it, and to improve our knowledge, and reduce all to practice. 2. We must be established in the belief



belief of the truth, that we may not be shaken by every wind of doctrine, and especially in that which is the present truth, what is the truth more peculiarly necessary for us to know in our day, what belongs to our peace, and what is more especially opposed in our time. The great doctrines of the gospel, *that Jesus is the Christ, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, that those who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, and all who believe in God must be careful to maintain good works.* These are truths the apostles insisted on in their day; *these are faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptance in every age of the Christian church.* And as these must be constantly affirmed by ministers, *Tit. iii. 8.* so the people are to be well instructed and established therein; and yet must, after all their attainments in knowledge, he put in mind of such things as cannot be too clearly known, nor too firmly believed. The most advanced Christians cannot, while in this world, be above ordinances, or beyond the need of those means, which God has appointed and does afford. And if the people need teaching and exhortation, while they are in the body, it is very meet and just that ministers should as long as they are in this tabernacle, instruct and exhort them, and bring those truths to their remembrance that they have formerly heard, this being a proper means to stir them to be diligent and lively in a course of gospel-obedience.

The apostle being set upon the work, tells us, *ver. 14.* what makes him earnest in this matter, even the knowledge he had, not only, that he must certainly, but also, that he must shortly *put off this tabernacle.* Observe, 1. The body is but the tabernacle of the soul. It is a mean and moveable structure, whose stakes can be easily removed, and its cords presently broken. 2. This tabernacle must be put off. We are not to continue long in this earthly house. As, at night, we put off our cloaths, and lay them by, so, at death we must put off our bodies, and they must be laid up in the grave, till the morning of the resurrection. 3. The nearness of death makes the apostle diligent in the business of life. Our Lord Jesus had shewn him, that the time of his departure was at hand, and therefore he bestirs himself with greater zeal and diligence, because the time is short; he must soon be removed from those to whom he wrote, and his ambition being, that they should remember the doctrine he had delivered to them, after he himself was taken away from them, he commits his exhortation to writing. The apostle had not any great opinion of oral tradition, that was not so proper a means to reach the end he was in pursuit of. He would have them always to remember these things, and not only to keep them in mind, but also to make mention of them, as the original words do import. *They who fear the Lord make mention of his name, and talk of his loving-kindness.* This is the way to spread the knowledge of the Lord; and this the apostle had at heart; and they who have the written word of God are thereby put into a capacity to do this.

16. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. 17. For he received from God the Father, honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* 18. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

Here we have the reason of giving the foregoing exhortation, and that with so much diligence and seriousness. These things are not idle tales, or a vain thing, but of undoubted truth and vast concern. The gospel is not a *cunningly devised fable.* These are not the words of one that hath a devil, or the contrivance of any number of men, who by cunning craftiness endeavour to deceive. The way of salvation by Jesus Christ is eminently the counsel of God, the most excellent contrivance of the infinitely wise Jehovah; it was he invented this way of saving sinners by Jesus Christ, whose power and coming are set forth in the gospel, and the apostle's preaching was a making these things known. 1. The preaching of the gospel is a making known the power of Christ, that he is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him. He is the mighty God, and therefore can save from both the guilt and filth of sin. 2. The coming of Christ also is made known by the preaching of the gospel. He that was promised immediately after the fall of man, as in the fulness of time to be born of a woman, is now come in the flesh, and whosoever denies this is an antichrist, *1 John iv.* 3. he is acted and influenced by the spirit of antichrist; but those who are the true apostles and ministers of Christ, and are directed and guided by the Spirit of Christ, they evidence that Christ is come according to the promise, which all the Old Testament believers died in the faith of, *Heb. xi. 39.* Christ is come in the flesh; inasmuch as those, whom he undertakes to save, *are partakers of flesh and blood, he himself also took part of the same,* that he might suffer in their nature and stead and thereby make an atonement. This coming of Christ the gospel is very plain and circumstantial in setting forth: But there is a second coming, which it likewise mentions, which the ministers of the gospel ought also to make known, when he shall come in the glory of his Father with all his holy angels, for he is appointed to be judge both of quick and dead. He will come to judge the world in right-

cousness by the everlasting gospel, and calls us all to give account of all things done in the body whether good or evil.

And though this gospel of Christ has been blasphemously called a fable by one of those wretches who call themselves the successors of St. Peter, yet our apostle proves, that it is of the greatest certainty and reality, inasmuch as during our blessed Saviour's abode here on earth, when he took on him the form of a servant, and was found in fashion as a man, he sometimes manifested himself to be God, and particularly to our apostle and the two sons of Zebedee, who were eye witnesses of his divine majesty, when he was transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light, exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them. This Peter, James and John were eye-witnesses of, and therefore might and ought to attest it; and surely their testimony is true, when they witness, what they have seen with their eyes, yea and heard with their ears: For besides the visible glory, that Christ was invested with here on earth, there was an audible voice from heaven. Where observe,

1. What a gracious declaration was made, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.* The best voice that ever came from heaven to earth; God is well pleased with Christ, and with us in him. This is the Messiah that was promised, through whom all who believe in him shall be accepted and saved. 2. This declaration is made by God the Father, who thus publicly owns his Son, even in his state of humiliation, when he was in the form of a servant; yea, proclaims him to be his beloved Son, when he was in that low condition, yea, so far are Christ's mean and low circumstances from abating the love of the Father to him, that his laying down his life is said to be one special reason of the Father's love, *John x. 17.* 3. The design of this voice is to do our Saviour a singular honour while he was here below. *He received honour and glory from God the Father.* This is the person whom God delights to honour. As he requires us to give honour and glory to his Son by confessing him to be our Saviour; so does he give glory and honour to our Saviour by declaring him to be his Son. 4. This voice is from heaven, called here the excellent glory, which still reflects a greater glory upon our blessed Saviour. This declaration is from God the fountain of honour, and from heaven the seat of glory, where God is most gloriously present. 5. This voice was heard, and that so as to be understood by Peter, James and John. They not only heard a sound, as the people did, *John xii. 28.* but they understood the sense. God opens the ears and understandings of his people to receive what they are concerned to know, when others are like Paul's companions, who only heard a sound of words, *Acts ix. 7.* but understood not the meaning thereof, and therefore are said not to hear the voice of him that spake, *Acts xxii. 9.* Blessed are those who not only hear, but understand, who believe the truth, and feel the power of the voice from heaven, as he did, who testifieth these things, and we have all the reason in the world to receive his testimony; for who would refuse to give credit to what is so circumstantially laid down, as this account of the voice from heaven, of which the apostle tells us? 6. That it was heard by them *in the holy mount,* when they were with Jesus. The place wherein God affords any peculiarly gracious manifestation of himself, is thereby made holy, not with an inherent holiness, but as the ground was holy where God appeared to Moses, *Exod. iii. 5.* and the mountain holy, on which the temple was built, *Psal. lxxxvii. 1.* Such places are relatively holy, and to be regarded as such, during the time that men do in themselves experience, or may, by warrant from the word, believingly expect the special presence and gracious influence of the holy and glorious God.

19. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in your hearts: 20. Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the holy Ghost.

In these words the apostle lays down another argument to prove the truth and reality of the gospel, and intimates, that this second proof is more strong and convincing than the former; and does more unanswerably make out, that the doctrine of the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ is not a mere fable, or cunning contrivance of men, but the wise and wonderful counsel of the holy and gracious God. For this is foretold by the prophets and penmen of the Old Testament who spake and wrote under the influence, and according to the directions of the Spirit of God. Here note,

1. The description that is given of the scriptures of the Old Testament, they are called *a more sure word of prophecy.* 1. It is a prophetic declaration of the power and coming, the Godhead and incarnation of our Saviour, which we have in the Old Testament. It is there foretold, *that the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head.* His power to destroy the devil and his works, and his being made of a woman, are there foretold; and the great and awful Old Testament name of God, Jehovah, as read by some, signifies only he will be; and that name of God, *Exod. iii. 14.* is rendered by many, *I will be that I will be;* and thus understood, they point



at God's being incarnate in order to the redemption and salvation of his people, as what was to come. But the New Testament is a history of that whereof the Old Testament is a prophecy. *All the prophets and the law prophesied until John*, Matth. xi. 13. And the evangelist and apostles have written the history of what was before delivered as prophecy. Now the accomplishment of the Old Testament by the New, and the agreeableness of the New Testament to the Old, is a full demonstration of the truth of both. Read the Old Testament as a prophecy of Christ, and with diligence and thankfulness use the New as the best exposition of the Old. 2. *The Old Testament is a more sure word of prophecy.* It is so to the Jews who received it as the oracles of God. Following prophets confirmed what had been delivered by those who went before, and these prophecies had been written by the express command, and preserved by the special care, and many of them fulfilled by the wonderful providence of God, and therefore were more certain to them who had all along received and read the scriptures, than the apostles account of this voice from heaven. *Moses and the prophets* do more powerfully persuade than even *miracles themselves*, Luke xvi. 31. How firm and sure should our faith be, who have such a firm and sure word to rest upon? All the prophecies of the Old Testament are more sure and certain to us who have the history of the exact and most minute accomplishment of them.

2. The encouragement the apostle gives us to search the scriptures. He tell us, *we do well, if we take heed to them*; that is, apply our minds to understand the sense, and our hearts to believe the truth of this sure word, yea, to bend our selves to it, that we may be molded and fashioned by it. The word is that form of doctrine into which we must be cast, *Rom. vi. 17. that formulary of knowledge*, *Rom. ii. 20.* by which we are to regulate our thoughts and sentiments, our words and confessions, our whole life and conversation. If we thus apply our selves to the word of God, we certainly do well in all respects, what is pleasing to God, and profitable to ourselves; and is indeed but a paying that regard which is due to the oracles of God. But in order to this giving heed to the word, the apostle suggests some things that are of singular use to those who would attend to the scriptures to any good purpose. 1. They must account and use the scripture as a light, which God hath sent into, and set up in the world, to dispel that darkness, which is upon the face of the whole earth. The word is a lamp to the feet of those who use it aright; this discovers the way wherein men ought to walk. This is the means whereby we come to know the way of life. 2. They must acknowledge their own darkness. This world is a place of error and ignorance, and every man in the world is naturally without that knowledge, which is necessary in order to attain eternal life. 3. If ever men are made wise to salvation, it is by the shining of the word of God into their hearts. Natural notions of God are not sufficient for fallen man, who does at best actually know a great deal less, and yet does absolutely need to know a great deal more of God than Adam did while he continued innocent. 4. When the light of the scripture is darted into the blind mind and dark understanding, by the holy Spirit of God, then the *spiritual day does dawn, and the day-star does arise in that soul.* This enlightning of a dark benighted mind is like the day-break that improves and advances, spreads and diffuses it self through the whole soul, till it make perfect day, *Prov. iv. 18.* It is a growing knowledge; they who are this way enlightned never think they know enough, till they come to know as they are known. To give heed to this light must needs be the interest and duty of all, and all that do truth come to this light, while evil-doers keep at a distance from it.

3. The apostle lays down one thing as previously necessary in order to our giving heed to, and getting good by the scriptures, and that is, the knowing that all prophecy is of divine original. Now this important truth he not only asserts, but proves. 1. Observe, that no scripture prophecy is of private interpretation, or a man's own proper opinion, an explication of his own mind, but the revelation of the mind of God. This was the difference between the prophets of the Lord and the false prophets, who hath been in the world. The prophets of the Lord did not speak or do any thing of their own mind, as Moses the chief of them says expressly, *Numb. xvi. 28. I have not done any of the works* (nor delivered any of the statutes and ordinances) *of my own mind.* But false prophets *speak a vision of their own heart, not out of the mouth of the Lord*, Jer. xxiii. 16. The prophets and penmen of the scripture spake, and wrote what was the mind of God; and though when under the influence and guidance of the Spirit, it may well be supposed, that they were willing to reveal and record such things, yet it is because God would have them spoken and written. But though the scripture be not the effusions of man's own private opinion or inclination, but the revelation of the mind and will of God, yet every private man ought to search it, and come to understand the sense and meaning thereof. 2. This important truth of the divine original of the scriptures, that what is contained in them, is the mind of God, and not of man, is to be known and owned by all that will give heed to the sure word of prophecy. That the Scriptures are the word of God, is not only an article of the true Christian's faith, but it is also a matter of science or knowledge. As a man doth not barely believe, but know assuredly, that that very person is his particular friend, in whom he sees all the proper, peculiar distinguishing marks and

characters of his friend; so the Christian knows, *that book to be the word of God*, in and upon which he sees all the proper marks and characters of a divinely inspired book. He tastes a sweetness, and feels a power, and sees a glory in it truly divine. 3. The divinity of the scriptures must be known and acknowledged in the first place, before men can profitably use them, before they can give good heed to them. To call off our minds from all other writings, and apply them in a peculiar manner to these, as the only certain and infallible rule, does necessarily require our being fully persuaded, that these are divinely inspired, and contain what is truly the mind and will of God.

Now seeing it is so absolutely necessary, that persons be fully persuaded of the scripture's divine original, the apostle, *ver. 21.* tells us how the Old Testament came to be compiled, and that, 1. Negatively, *it came not by the will of man.* Neither the things themselves that are recorded, and make up the several parts of the Old Testament, are the opinions of men, nor was the will of any of the prophets or penmen of the scriptures, the rule or reason, why any of those things were written, which make up the canon of scripture. 2. Affirmatively, *holy men of God, speak as moved by the holy Ghost.* Observe, 1. *They were holy men of God*, who were employed about that book, which we receive as the word of God. If Balaam and Cajaphas, and others, who were destitute of holiness, had any thing of the spirit of prophecy, upon occasion, yet such sort of persons were not employed to write any part of the scriptures for the use of the church of God. All the penmen of the scriptures were holy men of God. 2. *These holy men were moved by the holy Ghost* in what they delivered as the mind and will of God. The holy Ghost is the supreme agent, the holy men are but instruments. 1. The holy Ghost inspires and dictates to them, what they were to deliver of the mind of God. 2. He powerfully excites and effectually engages them to speak (and write) what he had put into their mouths. 3. He does so wisely and carefully assist and direct them in the delivery of what they had received from him, that they were effectually secured from any the least mistake in expressing what they revealed. So that the very words of scripture are to be accounted the words of the holy Ghost, and all the plainness and simplicity, all the power and virtue, and all the elegance and propriety of the very words and expressions are to be regarded by us, as proceeding from God. Mix faith therefore with what you find in the scriptures; esteem and reverence your bible as a book written by holy men, inspired, influenced and assisted by the holy Ghost.

#### C H A P. II.

*The apostle having in the foregoing chapter exhorted them to proceed and advance in the Christian race, he now comes to remove, as much as in him lay, what he could not but apprehend would hinder their complying with his exhortation. He therefore gives them fair warning of false teachers, by whom they might be in danger of being seduced. To prevent this, 1. He describes these seducers as impious in themselves, and very pernicious to others, ver. 1, 2, 3. 2. He assures them of the punishment that shall be inflicted on them, ver. 3, 4, 5, 6. 3. He tells us how contrary the method is which God takes with those who fear him, ver. 7, 8, 9. 4. He fills up the rest of the chapter with a farther description of those seducers of whom he would have them beware.*

1. **B**UT there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. 2. And many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil-spoken of. 3. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandize of you:

In the end of the former chapter there is mention made of holy men of God, that lived in the times of the Old Testament, and were used as the Amanuenses of the holy Ghost, in writing the sacred oracles, but in the beginning of this he tells us, they had, even in that time, false prophets in the church as well as true. In all ages of the church, and under all dispensations, when God sends true prophets, the devil sends some to seduce and deceive. False prophets in the Old Testament, and false Christs, and false apostles and seducing teachers in the New. Concerning these observe, 1. Their business is to bring in destructive errors, *even damnable heresies*, as the business of teachers sent of God is to shew the way of truth, even the true way to everlasting life. There are *damnable heresies* as well as damnable practices; and false teachers are industrious to spread pernicious errors. 2. *Damnable heresies* are commonly brought in privily under the cloak and colour of truth. 3. They who introduce destructive heresies, *deny the Lord that bought them.* They reject and refuse to hear and learn of the great teachers sent from God, though he is the only saviour and redeemer of men, who paid a price sufficient to redeem as many worlds of sinners, as there are sinners in the world. 4. They who bring in errors destructive to others, bring swift, (and therefore sure) *destruction upon themselves.* Self-destroyers are soon destroyed; and those who are so hardened as to propagate errors destructive to others, shall surely and suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

He



He proceeds in the second verse to tell us the consequence with respect to others, and here we may learn, 1. Corrupt leaders seldom fail of many to follow them; though the way of error is a pernicious way, yet many are ready to walk therein. Men drink in iniquity like water, and are pleased to live in error. *The prophets prophesy falsely, and the people love to have it so.* 2. The spreading of error will bring up an evil report on the way of truth; that is, the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, *who is the way, the truth and the life.* Christian religion is from the God of truth as the author, and leads to true happiness in the enjoyment of the true God as the end, and works truth in the inward part, as the means of acceptable serving God. And yet this way of truth is traduced and blasphemed by those who embrace and advance destructive errors. This the apostle has foretold, as what should certainly come to pass. Let us not be offended at any thing of this in our day, but take care that we give no occasion to the enemy to blaspheme the holy name whereby we are called, or spread evil of that way whereby we hope to be saved.

Observe, in the next place, the method seducers take to draw disciples after them. They use feigned words, they flatter, and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple, inducing them to give in entirely into the opinions which these seducers endeavour to propagate, and sell and deliver themselves over to the instruction and government of these false teachers, who make a gain of them whom they make their proselytes, serving themselves and making some advantage of them: For all this is through covetousness, with a desire and design to get more wealth, or credit, or commendation, by encreasing the number of their followers. The faithful ministers of Christ, who shew men the way of truth, desire the profit and advantage of their followers, that they may be saved; but these seducing teachers desire and design only their own temporal advantage and worldly grandeur.

— 3. Whose judgment now of a long time lingreth not, and their damnation slumbreth not. 4. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast *them* down to hell, and delivered *them* into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; 5. And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth *person*, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6. And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes, condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly;

Men are apt to think that a reprieve is the forerunner of a pardon, and if judgment be not speedily executed, it is, or will be certainly reversed. But the apostle tell us, that how successful and prosperous soever false teachers may be, and that for a time, *yet their judgment lingreth not.* God hath determined long ago how he will deal with them. Such unbelievers, who endeavour to turn others from the faith are condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on them. The righteous judge will speedily take vengeance; the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. To prove this assertion, here are several examples of the righteous judgment of God in taking vengeance on sinners, proposed to our serious consideration.

1. See how God dealt with the angels that sinned. Observe, 1. No excellency will exempt a sinner from punishment. If the angels, who excel us vastly in strength and knowledge, violate the law of God, the sentence, which that law does award, shall be executed upon them, and that without mercy or mitigation, for God did not spare them. Whence observe, 2. By how much the more excellent the offender, by so much the more severe the punishment. These angels, who had the advantage of men, as to the dignity of their nature, are immediately punished. There is no sparing them for a few days, no favour at all shewn them. 3. Sin does debase and degrade the persons who commit it. The angels of heaven are cast down from the height of their excellency, and divested of all their glory and dignity upon their disobedience. Whosoever sins against God, does a manifest hurt to himself. 4. They that rebel against the God of heaven, shall all be sent down to hell. There is no place or state between the height of glory and the depth of misery, in which they shall all be allowed to rest. If creatures sin in heaven, they must suffer in hell. 5. Sin is the work of darkness, and darkness is the wages of sin. The darkness of misery and torment follows the darkness of sin. They who will not walk according to the light and direction of God's law, shall be deprived of the light of God's countenance, and the comforts of his presence. 6. As sin binds men over to punishment, so misery and torment hold men under punishment. The darkness, which is their misery, keeps them so as that they cannot get away from their torment. 7. The last degree of torment is not till the day of judgment. The sinning angels, though in hell already, yet are reserved to the judgment of the great day.

2. See how God dealt with the old world, even in much what the same way that he dealt with the angels. He spared not the old world. Here observe, 1. The number of offenders signifies no more to procure any favour, than the quality. If the sin be universal, the punishment shall likewise extend to all. But, 2. If there be but a few righteous, they shall be preserved. God does not destroy the

good with the bad. He doth in wrath remember mercy. 3. They who are *preachers of righteousness* in an age of universal corruption and degeneracy, *holding forth the word of life* in an unblameable and exemplary conversation, shall be preserved in a time of general destruction. 4. God can make use of those creatures as the instruments of his vengeance in punishing sinners, which he at first made and appointed for their service and benefit. He destroys the whole world by water. But observe, 5. What is the procuring cause of this, *It was a world of ungodly men.* Ungodliness puts men out of divine protection, and exposes them to utter destruction.

3. See how God dealt with Sodom and Gomorrha, though they were situated in a country like the garden of the Lord, yet if in such a fruitful soil they shall abound in sin, God can soon turn a fruitful land into barrenness, and a well-watered country into dust and ashes. Observe, 1. No political union or confederacy can keep off judgments from a sinful people. Sodom, and the neighbouring cities were no more secured by their regular government, than the angels by the dignity of their nature, or the old world by their vast number. 2. God can make use of contrary creatures to punish incorrigible sinners. He destroys the *old world by water*, and Sodom by fire. He that keeps fire and water from hurting his people, *IJa. xliii.* 2. can make either to destroy his enemies, therefore they are never safe. 3. Most heinous sins bring most grievous judgments. They who were abominable in their vices, were remarkable for their plague. They who are sinners exceedingly before the Lord, must expect the most dreadful vengeance. 4. The punishment of sinners in former ages is designed for the example of those who come after, not only in the time of living, but follow them in their *course and way of living.* Men who live ungodly, must see what they are to expect, if they go on still in a course of impiety. Let us take warning by all the instances of God's taking vengeance, which are recorded for our admonition, and to prevent our promising ourselves impunity, though we go on in a course of sin.

7. And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: 8. (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day, with *their* unlawful deeds.) 9. The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.

When God sends destruction on the ungodly, he commands deliverance for the righteous; and if he rain fire and brimstone on the wicked, he will cover the head of the just, and they shall be hid in the day of his anger. This we have an instance of in his preserving Lot. Where observe, 1. The character given of Lot, he is called a just man; this he was as to the generally prevailing bent of his heart, and through the main of his conversation. God does not account men just or unjust from one single act, but from the general course of life. And here is a just man in the midst of a most corrupt and profligate generation, universally gone off from all good. He does not follow the multitude to do evil, but in a city of injustice he walks uprightly. 2. The impression the sins of others have upon this righteous man. Though the sinner takes pleasure in his wickedness, it is a grief and vexation to the soul of the righteous. In bad company we cannot escape either guilt or grief. Let the sins of others be a trouble to us, otherwise it will not be possible for us to keep our selves pure. 3. Here is particular mention of the duration and continuance of this good man's grief and vexation; *it was from day to day.* Being accustomed to see and hear their wickedness, did not reconcile him to it, nor abate of the horror that was occasioned by it. This is the righteous man that God preserved from the desolating judgment that destroyed all round about him. And from this instance we are taught to argue, that *God knows how to deliver his people*, and punish his enemies. It is here presupposed, that the righteous must have their temptations and trials. The devil and his instruments will thrust sore at them, that they may fall, and if we will get to heaven, it must be through many tribulations; it is then our duty to reckon upon, and prepare for them. Observe, here, 1. *The Lord knows them that are his.* He has set apart him that is godly for himself, and if there is but one in five cities he knows him; and where there is a greater number he cannot be ignorant, or overlook any one of them. 2. The wisdom of God is never at a loss about ways and means to deliver his people. They are often utterly at a loss, and can see no way; he can discover a great many. 3. The deliverance of the godly is the work of God; that which he concerns himself in, both his wisdom to contrive the way, and his power to work out the deliverance *out of temptation*, to prevent their falling into sin, and their being ruined by their troubles. And surely if he can deliver out of temptation, he can keep from falling into it, if he did not see such trials to be necessary. 4. God makes a very great difference in his dealings with the godly and the wicked. When he saves his people from destruction, he delivers over his enemies to deserved ruin. The unjust has no share in the salvation God works out for the righteous. The wicked are *reserved to the day of judgment.* Here we see, 1. There is a day of judgment. *God has appointed a day wherein he will judge the world.* 2. The preservation of impenitent sinners is only a reserving them to the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.



10. But chiefly them that walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government: presumptuous *are they*, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities: 11. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. 12. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; 13. And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, *as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day-time*: spots *they are*, and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings, while they feast with you; 14. Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: 15. Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam *the son of Bofor*, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16. But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with mans voice, forbad the madness of the prophet. 17. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest, to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. 18. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error: 19. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. 20. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome; the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. 21. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. 22. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and, The sow that has washed, to her wallowing in the mire.

The apostle's design being to warn us of, and arm us against seducers, he now returns to discourse more particularly of them, and give us an account of their character and conduct, which does abundantly justify the righteous Judge of the world in reserving them in an especial manner for the most severe and heavy doom; as Cain is taken under special protection, that he might be kept for uncommon vengeance: But why will God thus deal with these false teachers? this he shews in what follows.

*These walk after the flesh*, they follow the devices and desires of their own hearts, they give up themselves to the conduct of their own fleshly mind, refusing to make their reason stoop to divine revelation, and *bring every thought to the obedience of Christ*; they, in their lives, act directly contrary to God's righteous precepts, and comply with the demands of corrupt nature; evil opinions are often accompanied with evil practices; and they who are for propagating error, are for improving in wickedness; they will not sit down contented in *the measure of iniquity* to which they have attained, nor is it enough for them to stand up and maintain, and defend what wickedness they have already committed, but they *walk after the flesh*, they go on in their sinful course, and increase unto more ungodliness, and greater degrees of impurity and uncleanness too; they also pour contempt on those whom God has set in authority over them, and requires them to honour; these therefore despise *the ordinance of God*, and we need not wonder at it, for they are bold and daring, obstinate and refractory, and will not only in their hearts despise, but with their tongues will utter slanderous and reproachful words of those who are set over them.

This he aggravates, by setting forth the very different conduct of more excellent creatures, even the *angels*; of whom observe, 1. They *are greater in power and might*, and that even than those who are clothed with authority and power among the sons of men, and much more than those false teachers, who are slanderous revilers of magistrates and governors; the good *angels* vastly exceed us in all natural and moral excellencies, in strength, understanding, and holiness too. 2. Good *angels* are accusers of sinful creatures, either of their own kind, or ours, or both; they who are allowed to behold the face of God, and stand before his throne, cannot but have a zeal for his honour, and accuse and blame those who dishonour him. 3. *Angels bring their accusations* of sinful creatures *before the Lord*; they do not publish their faults, and tell their crimes to their fellow-creatures, in a way of calumny and slander; but it is *before the Lord*, who is the judge, and will be the avenger of all impiety and injustice. 4. The good *angels* mingle no bitter revilings, or base reproaches, with any of their *accusations*, or charges, they bring against the wickedest and worst of criminals; let us, who pray that *God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven*, imitate

the *angels* in this particular; if we complain of wicked men, let it be to God, and that not with rage and reviling, but with compassion and composedness of mind, that may evidence that we belong to him who is meek and merciful.

The apostle having shewn in *ver. 11.* how unlike seducing teachers are to the most excellent creatures, proceeds, *ver. 12.* to shew how like they are to the most inferior; they are *like the horse and mule, which have no understanding*; they are *as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed*; men, under the power of sin, are so far from observing divine revelation, that they do not exercise reason, or act according to the direction thereof; they *walk by sight, and not by faith*, and judge of things according to their senses; as they represent things pleasant and agreeable, so they must be approved and esteemed; brute creatures follow the instinct of their sensitive appetite, and sinful man follows the inclination of his carnal mind; these refuse to employ the understanding and reason God has given them, and so are ignorant of what they might and ought to know; and therefore observe, 1. Ignorance is the cause of evil-speaking, and, 2. Destruction will be the effect of it; these persons shall be utterly destroyed in their own corruption; their vices not only expose them to the wrath of God in another world, but many times bring them to misery and ruin in this life; and surely such sort of impudent offenders, who *glory in their shame*, and to whom openness in sin is an improvement of the pleasure of sinning, do most justly deserve all the plagues of this life, and the pains of the next, in the greatest extremity! therefore whatever they meet with is the just reward of *their unrighteousness*; such sinners, who *sport themselves* in mischief, deceive themselves, and disgrace all they belong to; for by one sort of sins they prepare themselves for another; and their extravagant feastings, their intemperance in eating and drinking, brings them to commit all manner of lewdness, so that their *eyes are full of adultery*; their wanton looks shew their own impure lusts, and are designed and directed to inkindle the like in others; and this is what they *cannot cease from*; the heart is insatiate in lusting, and the eye incessant in looking after what may gratify their unclean desires; and they who are themselves impudent and incessant in sin, are very diligent, and often successful, in deceiving others, and drawing others into *the same excess of riot*; but here observe who they are who are in the greatest danger of being led away into error and impiety, even the *unstable*; those whose hearts are not established with grace, are easily turned into the way of sin, or else such sort of sensual wretches will not be able to prevail upon them; for these are not only riotous and lascivious, but *covetous* also; and these kind of *practices their hearts are exercised with*; they pant after riches, and the desire of their souls is to the wealth of this world; it is a considerable part of their work to contrive to get wealth; in this their *hearts are exercised*, and then they execute their projects; and if men abandon themselves to all sorts of lusts, we cannot wonder that the apostle should call them *cursed children*; for they are liable to the curse of God denounced against such *ungodly, unrighteous men*, and they bring a curse upon all that hearken and adhere to them.

The apostle, *ver. 15, 16.* proves that they are *cursed children*, even such *covetous* persons as *the Lord abhors*, by shewing, 1. They *have forsaken the right way*; and it cannot be but such self-seekers must be out of *the right way*, which is a self-denying way. 2. They are gone into a wrong way; they have *err'd and strayed from the way of life, and gone over into the path which leads to death, and takes hold of hell*; and this he makes out by shewing it to be *the way of Balaam the son of Bofor*. 1. That is a way of *unrighteousness*, into which men are led by *the wages of unrighteousness*. 2. Outward temporal good things are *the wages* sinners expect, and promise themselves, though they are often disappointed. 3. The inordinate love of the good things of this world, turns men out of the way which leads to the unspeakably better things of another life; love of riches and honour turned Balaam out of the way of his duty, although he knew that the way he took *displeased the Lord*. 4. They, who, from the same principle, are guilty of the same practices with notorious sinners, are, in the judgment of God, the followers of such vile offenders, and therefore must reckon upon being at last where they are; *they shall have their portion* with those in another world, whom they imitated in this. 5. Heinous and hardened sinners do sometimes meet with rebukes for their iniquity. God stops them in their way, and does open the mouth of conscience, or, by some startling providence, startle and affright them. 6. Though some more uncommon and extraordinary *rebukes* may, for a little while, cool mens courage, and hinder their violent progress in the way of sin, it will not make them forsake the way of iniquity, and go over into the way of holiness; if rebuking a sinner for his iniquity would have made a man have returned to his duty, surely the rebuke of Balaam must have produced this effect; for here was a surprizing miracle wrought, *the dumb ass*, in whose mouth no man can expect to meet with *reproof*, is enabled to speak, and that with a human voice, and to her owner and master, who is here called a *prophet*, for the Lord appeared, and spake sometimes to him, *Numb. xxii. 23, 24.* but indeed he was *among the prophets* of the Lord, as Judas among the apostles of Christ; and she exposes *the madness* of his conduct, and opposes his going on in this evil way, and yet all in vain; they who will not yield to usual methods of reproof, will be but little influenced by miraculous ap-



pearances to turn them from their sinful courses; he is indeed restrained from actual *curfing the people*, but he had so strong a desire after the honours and riches that were promised him, that he went as far as he could, and did his uttermost to get from under the restraint that was upon him.

The apostle proceeds, in *ver. 17.* to a farther description of seducing teachers, whom he sets forth as *wells*, or fountains, *without water*. Observe, 1. Ministers should be as *wells*, or fountains, where the people may find instruction, direction, and comfort: But, 2. False teachers have nothing of this to impart to those who consult them; the word of truth is the water of life, which refreshes the souls that receive it; but these deceivers are set upon spreading and promoting error, and therefore are set forth as empty, because there is no truth in them; in vain then are all our expectations of being fed and filled with knowledge and understanding by those who are themselves ignorant and empty; they are also *clouds carried with a tempest*; when we see a cloud, we expect a refreshing shower from it; but these are clouds which yield no rain, for they are driven with the wind, but not of the Spirit, but the stormy wind, or tempest, of their own ambition and covetousness; they espouse and spread those opinions that will procure most applause and advantage to themselves; and, as clouds obstruct the light of the sun, and darken the air, so do these *darken counsel by words without knowledge*, and wherein there is no truth; and, seeing these men are for promoting darkness in this world, it is very just that *the mist of darkness* should be their portion in the next; *utter darkness was prepared for the devil*, the great deceiver, *and his angels*, those instruments that he uses to turn men away from the truth, and therefore for them it is *reserved*, and that *for ever*; the fire of hell is everlasting, and *the smoke of the bottomless pit riseth up for ever and ever*.

And it is just with God to deal thus with them, because, 1. They *allure* those they deal with, and draw them into a net, or catch them as men do fish; and, 2. It is *with great swelling words of vanity*, lofty expressions, which have a great sound, but little sense. 3. They work upon *the corrupt affections*, and *carnal, fleshly lusts of men*, proposing what is grateful to them: And, 4. They seduce persons, who, in reality, avoided, and kept at a distance from, those who spread, and those who embraced hurtful and destructive errors. Observe, 1. By application and industry men attain a skillfulness and dexterity in promoting errors, they are as artful and as successful as the fisher, that makes angling his daily employment; the business of these men is to draw disciples after them, and, in their methods and management, there are some things worth observing, how they suit their bait to those they desire to catch. 2. Erroneous teachers have a peculiar advantage to win men over to them, because they have sensual pleasures to take them with; whereas the ministers of Christ put men upon self-denial, and the mortifying of those lusts, that others gratify and please; wonder not therefore that truth prevails no more, or that errors spread so much! 3. Persons who have for a while adhered to the truth, and kept clear of errors, may, by the subtilty and industry of seducers, be so far deceived, as to fall into those errors they had for a while *clean escaped*; be therefore always upon your guard, maintain a godly jealousy of yourselves, search the scriptures, pray for the Spirit to instruct and establish you in the truth, walk humbly with God, and watch against every thing that may provoke him to give you up to a reprobate mind, that you may not be taken with the fair and specious pretences of these false teachers, who promise liberty to all that will hearken to them, but not true Christian liberty for the service of God, but a licentiousness in sin, to follow the devices and desires of their own hearts; to prevent these mens gaining proselytes, he tells us, that in the midst of all *their talk of liberty*, *they themselves are the vilest slaves*, for they *are the servants of corruption*; their own lusts have gotten a compleat victory over them, and they are actually in bondage to them, making *provision for the flesh*, to satisfy its cravings, and comply with its directions, and obey its commands; their minds and hearts are so far corrupted and depraved, that they have neither power nor will to refuse the task that is imposed on them; they are conquered and captivated by their spiritual enemies, and *yield their members servants of unrighteousness*: And what a shame is it to be overcome and commanded by those *who are themselves the servants of corruption, and slaves to their own lusts*! This consideration should prevent our being led away by these seducers; and to this he adds another, *ver. 20.* it is not only a shame and disgrace to be seduced by those who are *themselves the slaves of sin, and led captive by the devil at his pleasure*, but it is a real detriment to those who *have clean escaped from them who live in error*, for hereby *their latter end is made worse than their beginning*. Here we see, 1. It is an advantage to *escape the pollutions of the world*, to be kept from gross and scandalous sins, though men are not thoroughly converted, and savingly changed; for hereby we are kept from grieving those, who are truly serious, and emboldening those who are openly profane; whereas, if we run with others *to the same excess of riot*, and abandon ourselves to the sins of the age, we afflict and dishearten those who endeavour to *walk as becomes the gospel*, and strengthen the hands of those who are already engaged in open rebellion against the most High, as well as alienate ourselves more from God, and harden our hearts against him. 2. Some men are, for a time, *kept from the pollutions of the world, by the know-*

*ledge of Christ*, who are not savingly renewed in the spirit of their mind; a religious education has restrained many, whom the grace of God has not renewed; if we *receive the light of the truth*, and have a notional *knowledge of Christ* in our heads, it may be of some present service to us; but we must *receive the love of the truth*, and hide God's word in our heart, or it will not sanctify and save us. 3. Those who have, for a time, *escaped the pollutions of the world*, are at first *ensnared and entangled* by false teachers; they first perplex men with some plausible and specious objections against the truths of the gospel, and the more ignorant and *unstable* are hereby made to stagger, and brought to question the truth of doctrines they have received, because they cannot solve all the difficulties, nor answer all the objections, that are urged by these seducers. 4. When men are once *entangled*, they are *easily overcome*; therefore should Christians keep close to the word of God, and watch against those who seek to perplex and bewilder them, and that because if men that have once *escaped, are again entangled, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning*.

The apostle does, in the two last verses of the chapter, set himself to prove that a state of apostasy is worse than a state of ignorance; for this is a *condemning the way of righteousness*, after they have had some knowledge of it, and expressed some liking to it; this carries in it a declaring that they have found some iniquity in *the way of righteousness*, and some falshood in *the word of truth*; now to bring up such an evil report upon *the good way of God*, and such a false charge against *the way of truth*, must necessarily expose to the heaviest condemnation; the misery of such deserters of Christ, and his gospel, is more unavoidable, and more intolerable, than that of other offenders; for, 1. God is more highly provoked by them, who do, by their conduct, despise the gospel, as well as disobey the law, and do reproach, and pour contempt upon God, and his grace. 2. The devil does more narrowly watch, and more closely confine those whom he has recovered, after they had once gone off from him, and professed to be the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, *Matt. xii. 45.* they are kept under a stronger guard; and no wonder it should be so, when they have licked up *their own vomit again, returning* to the same errors and impieties that they had once cast off, and seemed to detest and lothe, and *wallow in that filthiness*, from which they appeared once to be really cleansed. Well, if the scripture gives such an account of Christianity on the one hand, and of sin on the other, as we have here in these two verses, we certainly ought highly to approve of the former, and persevere therein, because it is a *way of righteousness*, and a *holy commandment*, and to lothe, and keep at the greatest distance from the latter, because it is set forth as most offensive and abominable.

## C H A P. III.

*The apostle drawing toward the conclusion of his second epistle, begins this last chapter of it with repeating the account of his design and scope in writing a second time to them, ver. 1, 2. 2. He proceeds to mention one thing that induced him to write this second epistle, namely, the coming of scoffers, whom he describes, ver. 3.—7. 3. He instructs and establishes them in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ to judgment, ver. 8.—10. 4. He sets forth the use and improvement which Christians ought to make of Christ's second coming, and that dissolution and renovation of things which will accompany that solemn coming of our Lord, ver. 11.—18.*

1. **T**HIS second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: 2. That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:

That the apostle might the better reach his end in writing this epistle, which is to make them steady and constant in a fiducial and practical remembrance of the doctrine of the gospel, he, 1. Expresses his special affection and tenderness of them, by calling them *beloved*, hereby evidencing that he *added to godliness, brotherly-kindness*; as he had, *chap. i. 7.* exhorted them to do; ministers must be examples of love and affection, as well as life and conversation. 2. He evidences a sincere love to them, and hearty concern for them, by writing the same thing to them, though in other words; it being safe for them, it shall not be grievous to him to *write up* on the same subject, and pursue the same design, by those methods which are most likely to succeed. 3. The better to recommend the matter, he tells them, that what he would have them to remember, are, 1. *The words spoken by the holy prophets*, who were divinely inspired, both enlightened and sanctified by the holy Ghost; and seeing these persons minds were purified by the sanctifying operation of the same Spirit, they were the better disposed to receive and retain what came from God *by the holy prophets*. 2. *The commandments of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour*; and therefore the disciples and servants of Christ ought to regard what those who are sent by him have declared unto them to be the will of their Lord; what God has *spoken by the prophets* of the Old Testament, and Christ has commanded by the apostles of the New, cannot but demand and deserve to be frequently remembered; and they who medi-



meditate on these things, will feel the quickening virtue thereof; it is by these things the *pure minds* of Christians are to be stirred up, that they may be active and lively in the work of holiness, and zealous and unwearied in the way to heaven.

3. Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 4. And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation. 5. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water, and in the water: 6. Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. 7. But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men.

To quicken and excite us to a serious minding, and firm adhering to what God has revealed to us by the prophets and apostles, we are told that there will be *scoffers*, men who will both *make a mock of sin*, and of salvation from it: God's way of saving sinners by Jesus Christ, is what men will scoff at, and that *in the last days*, under the gospel. This, indeed, may seem very strange, that the New Testament dispensation of the covenant of grace, which is spiritual, and therefore more agreeable to the nature of God than the Old, should be ridiculed and reproached; but the spirituality and simplicity of New Testament worship is directly contrary to the carnal mind of man; and this accounts for what the apostle seems here to hint at, namely, that *scoffers* shall be more numerous and more bold *in the last days* than ever before; though, in all ages, those who were born and walked after the flesh, did persecute, revile, and reproach them who were born and did walk after the Spirit, yet *in the last days* there will be a great improvement in the art and impudence of bantering serious godliness, and those who firmly adhere to that circumspection and self-denial which the gospel prescribes; this is what is mentioned as a thing well known to all Christians, and therefore they ought to reckon upon it, that they may not be surprized and shaken, as if some strange thing happened unto them.

Now to prevent the true Christian's being overcome, when attacked by these *scoffers*, we are told, 1. What sort of persons they are; they *walk after their own lusts*, they follow the devices and desires of their own hearts, and carnal, corrupt affections, and not the dictates and directions of right reason, and an enlightened, well informed judgment; this they do in the course of their conversation, they live as they list, and they speak as they list; it is not only their inward minds that are evil, and opposite to God, as the mind of every unrenewed sinner is, *Rom. viii. 7.* alienated from God, ignorant of him, and averse to him; but they are grown to such an height of wickedness, that they proclaim openly what is in the hearts of others who are yet carnal; they say, their tongues are their own, and their strength, and time, and all is their own, and *who is lord over them?* who shall contradict, or controul them, or ever call them to an account for what they say, or do? and as they scorn to be confined by any laws of God in their conversation, so neither will they bear that the revelations of God should dictate and prescribe to them what they are to believe; as they will walk in their own way, and talk their own language, so will they also think their own thoughts, and form principles which are altogether their own; here also *their own lusts* alone shall be consulted by them; none but such accomplished libertines as are here described, can take a seat, at least they cannot *sit in the seat of the scornful*; by this ye shall know them, that ye may the better be upon your guard against them. 2. We also are foretold how far they will proceed, they will attempt to shake and unsettle us, even as to our belief of Christ's second coming; they will scoffingly say, *Where is the promise of his coming?* ver. 4. without this all the other articles of the Christian faith will signify very little; this is that which fills up, and gives the finishing stroke to all the rest; the promised Messiah is come, he *was made flesh, and dwelt among us*; he is altogether such an one as is said before, and has done all that for us which has been before taken notice of; these principles the enemies of Christianity have all along endeavoured to overturn; but, as these do all rest upon facts which are already past, and of which this and the other apostles have given us the most sure and satisfying evidence, it is probable, they will at last grow weary of their opposition to them; and yet, while one very principal article of our faith does refer to what is still behind, and only has a promise to rest upon, here they will still attack us, even to the end of time; till our Lord is come, they will not themselves believe that he will come; nay, they will laugh at the very mention of his second coming, and do what in them lies to put all out of countenance who do seriously believe and wait for it; now therefore let us see how this point stands, both on the believer's part, and on the part of these seducers; the believer does not only desire that he may come, but, having a *promise* that he will come, a *promise* that he himself has made, and oft repeated, a *promise* received and reported by faithful witnesses, and left upon sure record, he is also firmly and fully persuaded that he will come;

on the other hand, these seducers, because they wish he never may, therefore do all that in them lies to cheat themselves, and others, into a persuasion that he never will come; if they cannot deny that there is a *promise*, yet they will laugh at that very *promise*; which argues much higher degrees of infidelity and contempt; *Where is the promise*, say they, *of his coming?* 3. We are also forewarned of the method of their reasoning, for while they laugh, they will pretend to argue too; to this purpose they add, that *since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation*, ver. 4. this is a subtil, though not a solid way of reasoning, it is apt to make impressions upon weak minds, and especially upon wicked hearts; *because sentence against them is not speedily executed*, therefore they flatter themselves that it never will, whereupon *their hearts are fully set in them to do evil*, Eccl. viii. 11. thus they act themselves, and thus they would persuade others to act; so here, say they, *the fathers are fallen asleep*, they are all dead to whom *the promise was made*, and it never was made good in their time, and there is no likelihood that it ever will be in any time; why should we trouble ourselves about it? if there had been any truth or certainty in *the promise* you speak of, we should surely have seen somewhat of it before this time, some signs of his coming, some preparatory steps in order to it, whereas we find to this very day, *all things continue as they were*, without any change, even *from the beginning of the creation*; since the world has undergone no changes in the course of so many thousand years, why should we affright ourselves as if it were to have an end? Thus do these *scoffers* argue! *Because they see no changes, therefore they fear not God*, Psal. lv. 19. They neither fear him, nor his judgments; what he never has done, they would conclude he never can, or never will do.

4. Here is the falshood of their argument detected; whereas they confidently had said, there had not been any change *from the beginning of the creation*, the apostle puts us in remembrance of a change already past, which, in a manner, does equal that which we are called to expect, and look for; which was the drowning of the world in the days of Noah; this these *scoffers* had overlooked, they took no notice of it; though they might have known it, and ought to have known it, yet, *this they willingly are ignorant of*, ver. 5. they choose to pass it over in silence, as if they had never heard or known any thing of it; if they knew it, they did not like to retain it in their knowledge; they did not *receive this truth in the love of it*, neither did they care to own it. Note, It is hard to persuade men to believe what they are not willing to find true; *they are ignorant* in many cases, because *they are willing to be ignorant*; and they do not know, because they do not care to know: But let not sinners think that such ignorance as this will be admitted as an excuse for whatever sin it may betray them into; they who crucified Christ, did not know who he was; for *had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*, 1 Cor. ii. 8. but, though ignorant, they were not therefore innocent; their ignorance itself was a sin, willing and wilful ignorance; and one sin can be no excuse for another: So it is here; had these known of the dreadful vengeance with which God swept away a whole world of ungodly wretches at once, they would not surely have scoffed at his threatenings of any after equally terrible judgment; but here *they were willingly ignorant*; they did not know what God had done, because they had no mind to know it: Now, therefore, we shall proceed to consider the representation which the apostle here lays down, both of the destruction of the old world by water, and that which does await this present world at the final conflagration; he mentions the one as what God had done, to convince and persuade us the rather to believe, that the other both may be and will be: And first, we begin with the apostle's account of the destruction which has once already come upon the world, ver. 5, 6. *By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water, and in the water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.* Originally the world was otherwise situated, *the waters were most wisely divided at the creation*, and most beneficially for us; some of *the waters* had proper repositories *above the firmament*, here called *the heavens*, as it is also, *Gen. i. 8.* and others *under the firmament*, gathered together unto one place; there was then both *sea and dry land*, a commodious habitation for the children of men; but now, at the time of the universal deluge, the case is strangely altered; *the waters* which God had divided before, and assigned to each part their convenient receptacles, now does he, in anger, throw together again in an heap; *he breaks up the fountains of the great deep, and throws open the windows, i. e. the clouds of heaven*, *Gen. vii. 11.* till the whole earth was overflowed with water, and not a spot upon the highest mountains but what was *fifteen cubits under water*, *Gen. vii. 20.* Thus did he make known at once his terrible power, and his fierce anger; and made an end of a whole world at once; *the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished*, ver. 6. Is not here a change? and a most awful change! And then it is to be observed, that all this was done *by the word of God*, it was by his powerful word that the world was made at first, and made in so commodious and beautiful a frame and order, *Heb. xi. 3. ~~εὐλόγηται~~*. *He said, Let there be a firmament, &c. Gen. i. 6, 7. And let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, &c. ver. 9, 10.* Thus he spake, and it was done, *Psal. xxxiii. 9.* Thus, says our apostle, *by the word of the Lord the heavens were*, as they were of old, i. e. at the first creation;



tion, and the earth (as it was at first a terraqueous globe) *standing out of the water, and in the water*: Nor was it only the first frame and order of the world that is here said to be *by the word of God*, but the after confusion and ruin of the world, as well as the utter destruction of its inhabitants, was also *by the same word*; none but that God who *stretched out the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth*, could destroy and overthrow such a vast fabrick at once: This was done *by the word of his power*, and it was also done according to *the word of his promise*; God had said that he would *destroy man, even all flesh*, and that he would do it by bringing a *flood of waters upon the earth*, Gen. vi. 7, 13, 17. This was the change which God had before brought upon *the world*, and which these *scoffers* had overlooked; and now we are to consider, in the second place, what the apostle says of the destructive change which is yet to come upon it: *The heavens and the earth which now are, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men*, ver. 7. where we have an awful account of the final dissolution of *the world*, and which we are yet more nearly concerned in; the ruin that came upon the world, and its inhabitants, by the flood, we read, and hear, and think of with concern, though those who were swept away by it were such as we never knew; but the judgment here spoken of is yet to come, and will surely come, though we know not when, nor upon what particular age, or generation of men; and therefore we are not, we cannot be sure, that it may not happen in our own times; and this makes a very great difference, though it should be admitted that they were equal in every other respect, which yet must not be allowed (for there were some, though very few, who escaped that deluge, but not one can escape in this conflagration;) besides, that we were not in reach of the one, but are not sure that we shall not be included in the other calamity: Now, therefore, to see the world, to which we belong, destroyed at once; not a single person only, not a particular family only, nor yet a nation (even that which we are most nearly interested in, and concerned for) but the whole world, I say, sinking at once, and no ark provided, no possible way left of escaping for any one from the common ruin; this makes a difference between the desolation that has been, and what we yet are to expect: The one is already past, and never to return upon us any more; for God has said expressly, *that there shall never any more be a flood to destroy the earth*, Gen. ix. 11.—15. the other is still behind, and as certain to come as the truth and the power of God can make it; the one came gradually upon the world, and was growing upon its inhabitants forty days, before it made an utter end of them, Gen. vii. 12, 17. this other will come upon them swiftly, and all at once, 2 Pet. ii. 1. besides that there was in that overthrow (as we have said) a few who did escape, but the ruin which does yet await this world, whenever it comes, will be absolutely an universal one, not any part but what the devouring flames will seize upon, not a sanctuary left any where for the inhabitants to flee to, not a single spot in all this world where any one of them can be safe: Thus, whatever differences may be assigned between that destruction of the world, and this here spoken of, do indeed represent the approaching as the most terrible judgment; yet that the world has once been destroyed by an universal deluge, does render it the more credible that it may again be ruined by a universal conflagration; let therefore the *scoffers*, who laugh at the coming of our Lord to judgment, at last consider that it may be; there is nothing said of it in the word of God, but what is within reach of the power of God; and though they still should laugh, they shall not put us out of countenance; we are well assured that it will be, because he has said it, and we can depend upon his *promise*; they *do err, not knowing* (at least, not believing) *the scriptures, nor the power of God*; but we know, and we do, or ought to depend upon both: Now that which he has said, and which he will certainly make good, is, that *the heavens and the earth which now are*, which we are now related to, and which still subsist in all the beauty and order in which we see them, and which are so agreeable and useful to us as we find they are, they *are kept in store*, not to be, what earthly minds would wish to have them, treasures for us, but to be what God will have them, in his treasury, securely lodged, and kept safe for his purposes; it follows, they are *reserved unto fire*. Observe, God's following judgments are more terrible than those which went before; the old world was destroyed by water, but this is *reserved unto fire*, which shall burn up the wicked at the last day; and though this seems to be delayed, yet, as this wicked world is upheld by the word of God, so it is only reserved for *the vengeance of him to whom vengeance belongs*, who will, at the day of judgment, deal with an ungodly world according to their deserts, for *the day of judgment* is the day of *the perdition of ungodly men*; they who now scoff at a future judgment, shall find it a day of vengeance, and utter destruction; beware therefore of being among these *scoffers*; never question but *the day of the Lord will come*; give diligence therefore to be found in Christ, that it may be a time of refreshment, and day of redemption to you, which will be a day of indignation and wrath to the ungodly world.

8. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise (as some men count slackness) but is long-

suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. 10. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.

The apostle comes, in these words, to instruct and establish Christians in the truth of *the coming of the Lord*, where we may clearly discern the tenderness and affection wherewith he speaks to them, calling them *beloved*; he had a compassionate concern, and a love of good-will, for the ungodly wretches, who refused to believe divine revelation, but he has a peculiar respect for the true believers, and the remaining ignorance and weakness that he apprehends to be in them, make him jealous, and put him on giving them a caution: And here we may observe, 1. The truth which the apostle asserts, *that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day*. Though in the account of men there is a great deal of difference between a day and a year, and a vast deal more between one day and a thousand years, yet, in the account of God, who inhabits eternity, in which there is no succession, there is no difference; for all things past, present, and future, are ever before him; and the delay of a thousand years cannot be so much to him, as the deferring any thing for a day or hour is to us. 2. The importance of this truth; *this is the one thing* the apostle would not have us *ignorant of*; a holy awe, and reverential fear of God, is necessary in order to our worshipping and glorifying him; and a belief of the inconceivable distance between him and us, is very proper to beget and maintain that religious *fear of the Lord*, which is *the beginning of wisdom*: This is a truth *that belongs to our peace*, and therefore he endeavours it may not be *hid from our eyes*; as it is in the original, *let not this one thing be hid from you*: If men have no knowledge, or belief of the eternal God, they will be very apt to think him such an one as themselves: And yet how hard is it to conceive of eternity! It is therefore not very easy to attain such knowledge of God as is absolutely necessary.

In ver. 9. we are told, *the Lord is not slack*, he does not delay beyond the appointed time; as God kept the time that he had appointed for the delivering Israel out of Egypt to a day, Exod. xii. 41. so he will keep to the time appointed in coming to judge the world. What a difference is there between the account which God makes, and that which men make! Good men are apt to think God stays beyond the appointed time, that is, the time which they have set, for their own, and the church's deliverance; but they set one time, and God sets another, and he will not fail to keep the day which he has appointed: And ungodly men dare charge a culpable *slackness* upon God, as if he had slipt the time, and laid aside the thoughts of coming: But the apostle assures us, that what *men count slackness*, is truly *long-suffering*, and that *to us-ward*; it is a giving more time to his own people, *whom he has chosen before the foundation of the world*, many of whom are not as yet converted, and those who are in a state of grace and favour with God, are to advance in knowledge and holiness, and in the exercise of faith and patience, to abound in good works, doing and suffering what they are called to, that they may bring glory to God, and improve in a meetness for heaven; for God is *not willing that any of these should perish*, but that all of them should come to repentance. Here observe, 1. Repentance is absolutely necessary in order to salvation: *Except we repent, we shall perish*, Luke xiii. 3, 5. 2. God has *no delight in the death of sinners*; as the punishment of sinners is a torment unto his creatures, a merciful God does *not take pleasure* in it; and though the principal design of God, in his *long-suffering*, is the blessedness of them, *whom he has chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth*, yet his goodness and forbearance do in their own nature invite and call to *repentance* all those to whom they are exercised, and if men continue impenitent when God gives them space to repent, he will deal more severely with them, though the great reason why he did not hasten his coming, was because he had not accomplished *the number of his elect*; abuse not therefore *the patience and long-suffering of God*, by abandoning your selves to a course of ungodliness; presume not to go on boldly in *the way of sinners*, nor to sit down securely in an unconverted, impenitent state, as he that said, Matt. xxiv. 48. *My lord delayeth his coming*, lest he come and surprize you; for, as we read, ver. 10. *the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night*; where we may observe,

1. The certainty of *the day of the Lord*; though it is now above sixteen hundred years since this epistle was written, and *the day* is not yet come, it assuredly *will come*; God has appointed a day *wherein he will judge the world in righteousness*, and he will keep his appointment: *It is appointed to men once to die, and after this the judgment*, Heb. ix. 27. Settle it therefore in your hearts that *the day of the Lord will certainly come*, and you shall certainly be called to give an account of all things done in the body, whether good or evil; and let your exact walking before God, and your frequent judging yourselves, evidence your firm belief of a future judgment, when many live as if they were never to give any account at all. 2. The suddenness of this day; *it will come as a thief in the night*, at a time when men are sleeping, and secure, and have no manner of apprehension or expectation of *the day of the Lord*, no more than men



have of a thief, when they are in a deep sleep, in the dark and silent night: *At midnight there was a cry, Behold, the bridegroom comes*, Matt. xxv. 6. and at that time not only the foolish, but also the wise virgins slumbered and slept: *The Lord will come in a day when we look not for him, and an hour when men are not aware*: That time which men think to be the most improper and unlikely, and therefore are most secure, will be the time of the Lord's coming: Let us then beware how we in our thoughts and imaginations put that day far away from us; but rather suppose it to be so much nearer in reality, by how much farther off it is in the opinion of the ungodly world. 3. The solemnity of this coming; (1.) *The heavens shall pass away with a great noise*; the visible heavens, as unable to abide when the Lord shall come in his glory, shall pass away; they shall undergo a mighty alteration, and this shall be very sudden, and with such a noise, as the breaking and tumbling down of so great a fabrick must necessarily occasion. (2.) *The elements shall melt with fervent heat*: At this coming of the Lord, it shall not only be very tempestuous round about him, so that the very heavens shall pass away as in a mighty violent storm, but a fire shall go before him, that shall melt the elements, of which the creatures are composed. (3.) *The earth also, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up*: The earth, and its inhabitants, and all the works, whether of nature or art, shall be destroyed: The stately palaces and gardens, and all the desirable things wherein worldly-minded men did seek and place their happiness, all of them shall be burnt up; all sorts of creatures which God has made, and all the works of men must submit, all must pass through the fire, which shall be a consuming fire to all that sin has brought into the world, though it may be but a refining fire to the works of God's hand, that the glass of the creation being made much brighter, the saints may much better discern the glory of the Lord therein.

And now who can but observe what a difference there will be between the first coming of Christ and the second? and yet that is called *the great and dreadful day of the Lord*, Mal. iv. 5. How much more dreadful must this coming to judgment be! May we be so wise as to prepare for it, that it may not be a day of vengeance and destruction unto us: Oh! what will become of us, if we set our affections on this earth, and make it our portion, seeing all these things shall be burnt up? Look out therefore, and make sure of a happiness beyond this visible world, which must all be melted down.

11. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, 12. Looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? 13. Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. 14. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless: 15. And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother, Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; 16. As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. 17. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. 18. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ: To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

The apostle having instructed them in the doctrine of Christ's second coming, he takes occasion thence to exhort them to purity and godliness in their whole conversation; all the truths which are revealed in scripture, should be improved for our advancement in practical godliness; this is the effect that knowledge must produce, or we are never the better for it: *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them*. Seeing all these things must be dissolved, how holy should we be that are assured of it, departing from, and dying to sin, that has so corrupted and defiled all the visible creation, that there is an absolute need of its dissolution? All that was made for man's use, is subject to vanity by man's sin; and if the sin of man has brought the visible heavens, and the elements, and earth, under a curse, from which they cannot be freed without being dissolved, what an abominable evil is sin, and how much to be hated by us! And, inasmuch as this dissolution is in order to their being restored to their primitive beauty and excellency, how pure and holy should we be, in order to our being fit for the new heaven and new earth, wherein dwells righteousness? It is a very exact and universal holiness that he exhorts to, not resting in any lower measure or degree, but labouring to be eminent beyond what is commonly attained; holy in God's house, and in our own; holy in our worshipping of God, and in our conversing with men; all our conversations, whether with high or low, rich or poor, good or bad, friends or ene-

mies, must be holy; we must keep ourselves unspotted from the world in all our converses with it; we must be perfecting holiness in the fear of God, and in the love of God too; we must exercise ourselves unto godliness of all sorts, in all its parts, trusting in God, and delighting in God only, who continues the same, when the whole visible creation shall be dissolved; devoting ourselves to the service of God, and designing the glorifying and enjoyment of God, who endures for ever; whereas what worldly men delight in, and follow after, must all be dissolved; these things, which we now see, must, in a little while, pass away, and be no more as they now are; look therefore at what shall abide and continue, which, though it is not present, is certain, and not far off; this looking for the day of God, is one of the directions the apostle gives us, in order to our being eminently holy and godly in all manner of conversation; look for the day of God, as what you firmly believe shall come, and what you earnestly long for; the coming of the day of God is what every Christian must hope for, and earnestly expect; for it is a day when Christ shall appear in the glory of the Father, and evidence his divinity and Godhead, even to those who counted him a mere man: The first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he appeared in the form of a servant, was what the people of God did earnestly wait and look for; that coming was for the consolation of Israel, Luke ii. 25. How much more should they wait with expectation and earnestness for his second coming, which will be the day of their compleat redemption, and of his most glorious manifestation! then he shall come to be admired in his saints, and glorified in all them that believe: For though it cannot but terrify and affright the ungodly to see the visible heavens all in a flame, and the elements melting, yet the believer, whose faith is the evidence of things not seen, can rejoice in hope of more glorious heavens after these have been melted, and refined by that dreadful fire, which shall burn up all the dross of this visible creation. Here we must take notice, 1. What true Christians look for, and that is new heavens and a new earth, in which a great deal more of the wisdom, power, and goodness of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ will be clearly discerned, than we are able to discover in what we now see; for in these new heavens and earth, freed from the vanity the former were subject to, and the sin they were polluted with, only righteousness shall dwell; this is to be the habitation of such righteous persons who do righteousness, and are free from the power and pollution of sin; all the wicked shall be turned into hell; those only who are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and sanctified by the holy Ghost, shall be admitted to dwell in this holy place. 2. What is the ground and foundation of this expectation and hope, it is the promise of God; to look for any thing which God has not promised is presumption, but if our expectations are according to the promise, both as to the things we look for, and the time and way of their being brought about, we cannot meet with a disappointment; for he is faithful who has promised. See therefore that you raise and regulate your expectations of all the great things that are to come according to the word of God, and as to the new heaven and new earth, look for them as God has allowed and directed by the passages we have in this portion of scripture now before you, and in Isa. lxv. 17.—lxvi. 22. to which the apostle may be thought to allude.

As in ver. 11. he exhorts to holiness from the consideration that the heavens and earth shall be dissolved, so in ver. 14. he resumes his exhortation from the consideration that they shall be again renewed: Seeing you expect the day of God, when our Lord Jesus Christ will appear in his glorious majesty, and these heavens and earth shall be dissolved, and melted down, and, being purified and refined, shall be erected and rebuilt, prepare to meet him: It nearly concerns us to see in what state we are, when the Judge of all the world comes to pass sentence upon men, and to determine how it shall be with them to all eternity; this is the court of judicature whence there lies no appeal; whatever sentence is here passed by this great Judge is irreversible; therefore get ready to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ: And see to it, (1.) That you are found of him in peace, in a state of peace and reconciliation with God, through Christ, in whom alone God is reconciling the world to himself, and all that are out of Christ are in a state of enmity, and reject and oppose the Lord and his anointed, and shall therefore be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power: They, whose sins are pardoned, and their peace made with God, are the only safe and happy people; therefore follow after peace, and that with all: 1. Peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2. Peace in our own consciences, through the Spirit of grace witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God: 3. Peace with men, by having a calm and peaceable disposition wrought in us, resembling that of our blessed Lord. (2.) That ye be found of Christ without spot and blameless; follow after holiness as well as peace, and even spotless and perfect; not only take heed of all spots which are not the spots of God's children, this only prevents our being found of men without spot, but we must be found of Christ without spot, we must be pressing towards spotless purity, absolute perfection; Christians must be perfecting holiness, that they may be not only blameless before men, but also in the sight of God; and all this deserves and needs the greatest diligence; he that does this work negligently, can never do it successfully; never expect to be found at that day of God in peace, if you are lazy and idle in this your day, in which we must finish the work



work that is given us to do : It is only the diligent Christian that will be the happy Christian in *the day of the Lord* : Our Lord will suddenly come to us, or shortly call us to him, and would you have him find you idle ? Remember there is a curse denounced against him *who does the work of the Lord negligently*, Jer. xlviii. 10. Heaven will be a sufficient recompence for all our diligence and industry, therefore let us labour and take pains in *the work of the Lord* ; he will certainly reward us if we be diligent in the work he has allotted us ; now, that you may be diligent, *account the long-suffering of our Lord to be salvation* : Does your Lord delay his coming ? Do not think this is to give more time to make provision for your lusts, to gratify them ; it is so much space to repent, and work out your salvation. It proceeds not from a want of concern, or compassion for his suffering servants, nor is it designed to give countenance and encouragement to the world of the ungodly, but that men may have time to prepare for eternity. Learn then to make a right use of the patience of our Lord, who does as yet delay his coming. Follow after peace and holiness, or else his coming will be dreadful unto you. And inasmuch as it is difficult to prevent mens abuse of God's patience, and engage them in the right improvement thereof, our apostle quotes St. Paul as directing men to make the same good use of the divine forbearance, that in the mouth, or from the pen of two apostles the truth might be confirmed. And we may here observe with what esteem and affection he speaks of him, who had formerly publicly withstood and sharply reproved St. Peter. If a righteous man smite one that is truly religious, it shall be received as a kindness ; and let him reprove, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall soften and sweeten the good man, that is reprov'd when he does amiss. What an honourable mention does this apostle of the circumcision make of that very man, who had openly, *before all, reproved him*, as not walking uprightly, according to the truth of the gospel ? 1. He calls him brother, whereby he means, not only, that he is a fellow Christian, in which sense the word brethren, is used, 1 *Thes.* v. 27. or a fellow-preacher, in which sense St. Paul calls Timothy the evangelist a brother, *Col.* i. 1. but a fellow-apostle, one who had the same extraordinary commission, immediately from Christ himself, to preach the gospel in every place, and to disciple all nations. Though many seducing teachers denied Paul's apostleship, yet St. Peter owns him to be an apostle. 2. He calls him beloved, and they being both alike commissioned, and both united in the same service of the same Lord, it would have been very unseemly if they had not been united in affection to one another, for the strengthening one another's hands, mutually desirous of, and rejoicing in one another's success. 3. He mentions St. Paul as one who had an uncommon measure of wisdom given unto him. He was a person of eminent knowledge in the mysteries of the gospel, and did neither in that, or any other qualification, come behind any of all the other apostles. How desirable is it, that those who preach the same gospel, would treat one another according to the pattern St. Peter here sets them ? It is surely their duty to endeavour, by proper methods, to prevent or remove all prejudices that hinder ministers usefulness, and to beget and improve that esteem and respect in the minds of people toward their ministers, as may promote the success of their labours. And let us also here observe, 1. The excellent wisdom that was in St. Paul is said to be given him. That understanding and knowledge that qualifies men to preach the gospel, is the gift of God. We must seek for knowledge, and labour to get understanding, in hopes that it shall be given us from above, while we are diligent in using proper means to attain it. 2. The apostle imparts to men according as he had received from God. He endeavours to lead others as far as he himself was led into the knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel. He is not an intruder into those things he had not seen or been fully assured of, and yet he does not fail to declare the whole counsel of God, *Acts* xx. 27. 3. The epistles which were written by the apostle of the Gentiles, and directed to those Gentiles who believed in Christ, are designed for the instruction and edification of those, who from among the Jews were brought to believe in Christ ; for it is generally thought, what is here alluded to, is contained in the epistle to the Romans, *chap.* ii. *ver.* 4. though in all his epistles there are some things that refer to one or other of the subjects treated of in this and the foregoing chapter, and it cannot seem strange, that those who were pursuing the same general design, should in their epistles insist upon the same things. But the apostle Peter proceeds to tell us, that in those things which are to be met with in St. Paul's epistles, there are some things hard to be understood. Among the variety of subjects treated of in

scripture, some are not easy to be understood, because of their own obscurity, such are prophecies ; others cannot be so easily understood, because of their excellency and sublimeness, as the mysterious doctrines ; and others are with difficulty taken in, because of the weakness of mens minds, such are the things of the Spirit of God, mentioned 1 *Cor.* ii. 14. And here the unlearned and unstable make wretched work ; for they rest and torture the scriptures to make them speak what the holy Ghost did not intend. Those who are not well instructed and well established in the truth, are in great danger of perverting the word of God. They who have heard and learned of the Father, are best secured from misunderstanding and misapplying any part of the word of God ; and where there is a divine power to establish as well as to instruct men in divine truth, persons are effectually secured from falling into errors. And how great a blessing this is, we learn by observing what is the pernicious consequence of the errors that ignorant and unstable men fall into, even their own destruction. Errors in particular concerning the holiness and justice of God are the utter ruin of multitudes of men. Let us therefore earnestly pray for the Spirit of God to instruct us in the truth, that we may know it, as it is in Jesus, and have our hearts established with grace, that we may stand firm and unshaken, even in the most stormy times, when others are tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.

In *ver.* 17. the apostle gives them a word of caution, where he intimates, that the knowledge we have of these things should make us very wary and watchful, inasmuch as there is a twofold danger. 1. *We are in great danger of being seduced*, and turned away from the truth. The unlearned and unstable, and they are very numerous, do generally wrest the scripture. Many who have the scriptures, and read them, do not understand what they read ; and too many of those who have a right understanding of the sense and meaning of the word, are not established in the belief of the truth, and all these are liable to fall into error. Few attain to the knowledge and acknowledgment of doctrinal Christianity, and fewer find, so as to keep in the way of practical godliness, which is the narrow way, which only leadeth unto life. There must be a great deal of self-denial and suspicion of our selves, and submitting to the authority of Christ Jesus our great prophet, before we can heartily receive all the truths of the gospel, and therefore we are in great danger of rejecting the truth. 2. *We are in great danger by being seduced*. For, 1. So far as we are turned from the truth, *so far are we turned out of the way to true blessedness*, into the path which leads to destruction. If men corrupt the word of God, it tends to their own utter ruin. 2. When men wrest the word of God, *they fall into the error of the wicked*, men without law, that keep to no rules, set no bounds to themselves ; a sort of free-thinkers, which the psalmist does detest, *Psal.* cxix. 113. *I hate vain thoughts, but thy law do I love*. Whatever opinions and thoughts of men are not conformable to the law of God, and warranted by it, the good man does disclaim and abhor ; they are the conceits and counsels of the ungodly, who have forsaken God's law, and if we imbibe their opinions, we shall too soon imitate their practices. 3. They who are led away by error *fall from their own steadfastness*. They are wholly unhinged and unsettled, and know not where to rest, but are at the greatest uncertainty, like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. It nearly concerns us therefore to be upon our guard, seeing the danger is so great.

Now that we may the better avoid being led away, the apostle, *ver.* 18. directs us what to do. And, 1. *We must grow in grace*. He had in the beginning of the epistle exhorted us to add one grace to another, and here he advises us to grow in all grace. in faith, and virtue, and knowledge. By how much the stronger grace is in us, by so much the more steadfast, shall we be in the truth. 2. *We must grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ*. Follow on to know the Lord. Labour to know him more clearly, and more fully, to know more of Christ, and to know him to better purpose, so as to be more like him, and to love him better. This is the knowledge of Christ the apostle Paul did reach after, and desire to attain to, *Phil.* iii. 10. Such a knowledge of Christ as confirms us more to him, and endears him more to us, must needs be of great use to us to preserve us from falling off in times of general apostasy ; and they who experience this effect of the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, will upon receiving such grace from him, give thanks and praise to him, and join with our apostle saying, *to him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.*



# A N E X P O S I T I O N

OF THE

## First Epistle General of JOHN, With Practical Observations.

*Though the continued tradition of the church attests, that this epistle came from St. John the apostle, yet we may observe some other evidence that will confirm (or with some, perhaps, even outvay) the certainty of that tradition. It should seem, that the penman was one of the apostolical college, by the sensible, palpable assurance he had of the truth of the Mediator's person in his human nature; that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, ver. 1. He here takes notice of the evidence the Lord gave to Thomas, of his resurrection, by calling him to feel the prints of the nails, and of the spear, which is recorded by John. And he must be one of the disciples present, when the Lord came, on the same day, in which he arose from the dead, and shewed them his hands and his side, John xx. 20. But, that we may be assured which apostle this was, there is scarce a critick or competent judge of diction, or stile of argument and spirit, but will adjudge this epistle to the writer of that gospel, that bears the name of the apostle John. They wonderfully agree in the titles and characters of the Redeemer; the word, the life, the light; his name was the word of God. Compare 1 John i. 1. and chap. v. 7. with John i. 1. and Rev. xix. 13. in the commendation of God's love to us, 1 John iii. 1. and chap. iv. 9. John iii. 16. in speaking of our regeneration, or being born of God; 1 Epist. iii. 9. chap iv. 7. and chap. v. 1. John iii. 5, 6. Lastly (to add no more instances, which may be easily seen in comparing this epistle with that gospel) in the allusion to, or application of that passage in that gospel, which relates (and which only relates) the issuing of water and blood out of the Redeemer's opened side: This is he that came by water and blood, chap. v. 6. Thus the epistle plainly appears to flow from the same pen as that gospel did. Now, I know not, that the text, or the intrinsic history of any of the gospels, gives us such assurance of its writer or penman, as that ascribed to John plainly does. There (viz. chap. xxi. 24.) the sacred historian thus notifies himself; this is the disciple that testifieth of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. Now who is this disciple, but he, concerning whom Peter asked, what shall this man do? And concerning whom the Lord answered, if I will, that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? ver. 22. And who in, ver. 20. is described by these three characters. 1. That he is the disciple whom Jesus loved. (The Lord's peculiar friend). 2. That he also leaned on his breast at supper. 3. That he said unto him, Lord, who is he that betrayeth thee? As sure then as it is, that that disciple was John, so sure may the church be, that that gospel and this epistle came from the beloved John.*

*The epistle is stiled general, as being not inscribed to any particular church; it is as a circular letter (or a visitational charge) sent to diverse churches (some say of Parthia) in order to confirm them in their stedfast adherence to the Lord Christ, and the sacred doctrine concerning his person and office, against seducers; and to instigate them to adorn that doctrine by love to God and man; and particularly to each other, as being descended from God, united by the same head, and travelling towards the same eternal life.*

### C H A P. I.

*Evidence given concerning Christ's person and excellency, ver. 1, 2. The knowledge thereof gives us communion with God and Christ, ver. 3. And joy, ver. 4. A description of God, ver. 5. How we are thereupon to walk, ver. 6. The benefit of such walking, ver. 7. The way to forgiveness, ver. 9. The evil of denying our sin, ver. 8,—10.*

1. **T**HAT which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; 2. (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us) 3. That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. 4. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

The apostle omits his name and character (as also the author to the Hebrews does) either out of humility, or as being willing that the Christian reader should be swayed by the light and weight of the things wrote, rather than by the name that might recommend them. And so he begins,

1. With an account, or character of the Mediator's person. He is the great subject of the gospel; the foundation and object of our faith and hope; the bond and cement that unites us unto God. He should be well known; and he is represented here, 1. *As the word*

*of life, ver. 1. In the gospel these two are disjoined, and he is called first, The word, ver. 1. and afterward, life, intimating withal, that he is intellectual life. In him was life, and that life was (efficiently and objectively) the life of men, ver. 4. Here both are conjoined; the word of life. The vital word. In that he is the word, it is intimated, that he is the word of some person or other; and that is God, even the Father. He is the word of God, and so he is intimated to issue from the Father, as truly (though not in the same manner) as a word (or speech, which is a train of words) from a speaker. But he is not a mere vocal word, (a bare λόγος προφορικός) but a vital one. The word of life; the living word. And thereupon, 2. *As eternal life.* His duration shews his excellency. He was from eternity; and so is, in scripture-account, necessary, essential, uncreated life. That the apostle speaks of his eternity, *a parte ante*, (as they say) and as from everlasting, seems evident in that he speaks of him, as he was in, and from the beginning; when he was then with the Father, before his manifestation to us, yea, before the making of all things that were made; as John i. 2, 3. So that he is the eternal, vital, intellectual word of the eternal, living Father. 3. *As life manifested, ver. 2.* Manifested in the flesh; manifested to us. The eternal life would assume mortality; would put on flesh and blood (in the intire human nature) and so dwell among us, and converse with us, John i. 14. Here was condescension and kindness indeed, that eternal life (a person of eternal, essential life) should come to visit mortals, and to procure eternal life for them, and then confer it on them!*

2. With the evidence, and convictive assurances that the apostle and his brethren had of the Mediator's presence and converse in the world, there were sufficient demonstrations of the reality of his abode here, and of the excellency and dignity of his person in the way of his manifestation. *The life, the word of life, the eternal life,*



life, as such, could not be seen and felt; but the life manifested might be, and was so. The life was clothed with flesh; put on the state and habit of abased human nature; and, as such, gave sensible proof of its existence and transactions here. The divine life, or word incarnate, presented and evinced it self to the very senses of the apostles. As, 1. To their ears. *That which we have heard*, ver. 1, 3. The life assumed a mouth and tongue, that he might utter words of life. The apostles not only heard of him, but they heard him himself. Above three years might they attend his ministry, and be auditors of his publick sermons, and private expositions (for he expounded them in the house) and be charmed with the words of him that spake as never man spake before, or since. The divine word would employ the ear, and the ear should be devoted to the word of life. And it was meet, that they that were to be his representatives and imitators to the world, should be personally acquainted with his ministrations. 2. To their eyes. *That which we have seen with our eyes*, ver. 1, 2, 3. The word would become visible; would not only be heard, but be seen; seen publickly, privately, at distance, and at nearest approach; which may be intimated in the expressions, *with our eyes*; with all the use and exercise that we could make of our eyes. We saw him in his life and ministry; saw him in his transfiguration on the mount, hanging, bleeding, dying and dead upon the cross; and we saw him after his return from the grave, and resurrection from the dead. His apostles must be eye-witnesses as well as ear-witnesses of him. *Wherefore, of these men that have accompanied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection*, Acts i. 21, 22. And we were eye-witnesses of his majesty, 1 Pet. i. 16. 3. To their internal sense; to the eyes of their mind; for so (possibly) may the next clause be interpreted, *which we have looked upon*. This may be distinguished from the foregoing perception, *seeing with the eyes*; and may be the same with that the apostle says in his gospel, chap i. 14. *And we beheld, ἐθεασάμεθα, his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*. Where the word is not applied to the immediate object of the eye, but that was rationally collected from what they saw. What we have well discerned, contemplated and viewed: What we have well known of this word of life, we report to you. The senses are to be the informers of the mind. 4. To their hands and sense of feeling. *And our hands have handled* (touched and felt) *of the word of life*. This surely refers to the full conviction our Lord afforded his apostles of the truth, reality, solidity and organization of his body, after his resurrection from the dead. When he shewed them his hands and his side, it is probable he gave them leave to touch him; at least, he knew of Thomas's unbelief, and his professed resolution too, not to believe, till he had found and set the places and signatures of the wounds by which he died. Accordingly, at the next congress he called Thomas, in the presence of the rest, to satisfy the very curiosity of his unbelief. And, probably, others of them did so too. *Our hands have handled of the word of life*. The invisible life and word was no despiser of the testimony of sense. Sense, in its place and sphere, is a means that God hath appointed, and the Lord Christ hath employed for our information. Our Lord took care to satisfy (as far as might be) all the senses of his apostles, that they might be the more authentick witnesses of him to the world. They that apply all this to the law and the gospel, lose the variety of sensations here mentioned in the propriety of the expressions and the reason of their inculcation and repetition here. I say, *that which we have seen and heard, and found, declare we unto you*, ver. 3. The apostles could not be deceived in such long and various exercise of their sense. Sense must minister to reason and judgment; and reason and judgment must minister to the reception of the Lord Christ and his gospel. The rejection of the Christian revelation, is at last, resolved into the rejection of sense it self. *He upbraided them with their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed them not who had seen him after he was risen*, Mark xvi. 14.

3. With a solemn assertion and attestation of these grounds and evidences of the Christian truth and doctrine, the apostles publish these assurances for our satisfaction. *We bear witness, and shew unto you*, ver. 2. *That which we have seen and heard, declared we unto you*, ver. 3. It became the apostles to open to the disciples the evidence by which they were led; the reasons by which they were constrained to proclaim and propagate the Christian doctrine in the world. Wisdom and integrity obliged them to demonstrate that it was not either private fancy, or cunningly-devised fable that they presented to the world. Evident truth would open their mouths and force a publick profession. *We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*, Acts iv. 20. It concerned the disciple to be well assured of the truth of the institution they had embraced. They should see the evidences of their holy religion. It fears not the light, nor the most judicious examinations. It is able to afford rational conviction, and solid persuasion of mind and conscience. *I would that ye knew what great conflict I have* (or concern of mind) *for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh, that their hearts might be knit together in love, and unto all riches of full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, even of the Father, and of Christ*, Col. ii. 1, 2.

4. With the reason of the apostles exhibiting and asserting this summary of sacred faith, and this breviary of evidence attending it. And this reason is twofold.

1. That the believers of it may be advanced to the same happiness with them; (with the apostles themselves.) *That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us*, ver. 3. The apostle means not personal fellowship or consociation in the same church-administrations, but such as is consistent with personal distance from each other. It is communion with heaven, and in blessings that come from thence, and tend thither. This we declare and testify, that you may share with us in our privileges and happiness. Gospel spirits (or those that are made happy by gospel grace) would fain have others happy too. We see also, there is a fellowship or communion that runs through the whole church of God. There may be some personal distinctions and peculiarities, but there is a communion (or common participation of privilege and dignity) belonging to all saints, from the highest apostle to the lowest believer. As there is the same precious faith, there are the same precious promises dignifying and crowning that faith, and the same precious blessings and glories enriching and filling those promises. Now that believers may be ambitious of this communion, that they may be instigated to retain and hold fast the faith that is the means of such communion, that the apostles also may manifest their love to the disciples in assisting them to the same communion with themselves, they indicate what it is, and where it is. *And truly our fellowship* (or communion) *is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ*. We have communion with the Father, and with the Son of the Father (as 2 Epist. ver. 3. he is most emphatically styled) in our happy relation to them, in our receiving heavenly blessings from them, and in our spiritual converse with them. We have now such supernatural conversation with God and the Lord Christ, as is an earnest and foretaste of our everlasting abode with them, and enjoyment of them in the heavenly glory. See whither the gospel revelation tends, to advance us far above sin and earth, and to carry us to blessed communion with the Father and the Son. See for what end the eternal life was made flesh, viz. That he might advance us to eternal life in communion with the Father and himself. See how far they live beneath the dignity, use and end of the Christian faith and institution, that have not spiritual, blessed communion with the Father and the Son Jesus Christ.

2. That believers may be enlarged and advanced in holy joy. *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full*, ver. 4. The gospel dispensation is not properly a dispensation of fear, sorrow, and dread, but of peace and joy. Terror and astonishment may well attend mount Sinai, but exultation and joy, mount Zion; where appears *the eternal word, the eternal life* manifested in our flesh. The mystery of the Christian religion is directly calculated for the joy of mortals. It should be joy to us, that the eternal Son should come to seek and save us, that he has made a full atonement for our sins; that he has conquered sin, and death, and hell; that he lives as our intercessor and advocate with the Father; and that he will come again to perfect and glorify his persevering believers. And therefore they live beneath the use and end of the Christian revelation, that are not filled with spiritual joy. Believers should rejoice in their happy relation to God, as his sons and heirs, his beloved and adopted. In their happy relation to the Son of the Father, as being members of his beloved body, and coheirs with himself; in the pardon of their sins, in the sanctification of their natures, in the adoption of their persons, in the prospect of grace and glory that will be revealed at the return of their Lord and head from heaven. Were they confirmed in their holy faith, how would they rejoice? *The disciples were filled with joy, and with the holy Ghost*, Acts xiii. 52.

5. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lye, and do not the truth: 7. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

The apostle having declared the truth and dignity of the author of the gospel, brings a message or report from him; from which, just conclusion is to be drawn for the consideration and conviction of the professors of religion, or professed entertainers of this glorious gospel.

1. Here is the message or report that the apostle avers to come from the Lord Jesus: *This then is the message which we have heard of him*, ver. 5. of his Son Jesus Christ. As he was the immediate sender of the apostles, so he is the principal person spoken of in the precedent context, and the next antecedent also, to whom the article [*him*] can relate. The apostles and apostolical ministers are the messengers of the Lord Jesus; it is their honour, the chief they pretend to, to bring his mind and messages to the world, and to the churches. This is the wisdom and present dispensation of the Lord Jesus, to send his messages to us by persons like our selves. He that put on human nature, will honour earthen vessels. It was the ambition of the apostles to be found faithful, and faithfully to deliver the errands and messages they had received. What was communicated to them, they were solicitous to impart. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you*. A message from the word of life, from the eternal word, we should gladly receive: And the

present



present one is this ; relating to the nature of God, whom we are to serve, and with whom we should covet all indulged communion. *That God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*, ver. 5. This report asserts the excellency of the divine nature. He is all that beauty and perfection that can be represented to us by light. He is self-active, uncompounded spirituality, purity, wisdom, holiness and glory ; and then the absoluteness and fulness of that excellency and perfection. There is no defect or imperfection, no mixture of any thing alien or contrary to absolute excellency, no mutability or capacity of any decay in him. *In him is no darkness at all*, ver. 5. Or this report may more immediately relate to (what is usually called) the moral perfection of the divine nature ; what we are to imitate, or what is more directly to influence us in our gospel work. And so it will comprehend the holiness of God, the absolute purity of his nature and will ; his penetrative knowledge, (particularly of hearts ; ) his jealousy and justice, which burns as a most bright and vehement flame. It is meet, that to this dark world, the great God should be represented as pure and perfect light. It is the Lord Jesus that best of all opens to us the name and nature of the unsearchable God. *The only begotten, that is in the bosom of the Father, the same hath declared him*. It is the prerogative of the Christian revelation to bring us the most noble, the most august and agreeable account of the blessed God ; such as is most suitable to the light of reason, and what is demonstrable thereby ; most suitable to the magnificence of his works round about us, and to the nature and office of him that is the supreme administrator, governor, and judge of the world. What more (relating to, and comprehensive of all such perfection) could be concluded in one word, than in this, *God is light, and in him is no darkness at all* ? Then,

2. There is a just conclusion to be drawn from this message and report ; and that for the consideration and conviction of professors of religion, or professed entertainers of this gospel. And this conclusion issues into two branches. 1. For the conviction of such professors as have no true fellowship with God. *If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth*. It is known, that to walk, in scripture account, is to order and frame the course and actions of the moral life, *i. e.* of the life so far as it is capable of subjection to the divine law. *To walk in darkness*, is to live and act according to such ignorance, error, and erroneous practice, as is contrary to the fundamental dictates of holy religion. Now there may be those that may pretend to great attainments and enjoyments in religion : They may profess to have communion with God ; and yet their lives may be irreligious, immoral and impure. To such the apostle would not fear to give the lie. *They lie, and do not the truth*. They belye God ; for he holds no heavenly fellowship or intercourse with unholy souls. What communion hath light with darkness ? They belye themselves, or lie concerning themselves ; for they have no such communications from God, nor access to him. There is neither truth in their profession, nor practice ; or their practice gives their profession and pretences the lie, and demonstrates the folly and falsehood of them. 2. For the conviction, eviction, and consequent satisfaction of those that are near to God. *But if we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another ; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*. As the blessed God is the eternal, boundless light, and the mediator is, from him, the light of the world ; so the Christian institution is the great luminary that appears in our sphere, and shines here below. A conformity to this in spirit and practice, demonstrates fellowship or communion with God. They that so walk, shew that they know God, that they have received of the Spirit of God, and that the divine impression or image is stamped upon their souls. *Then we have fellowship one with another*. They with us, and we with them, and both with God, in his blessed, or beatific communications to us. And this is one of those beatific communications to us, that his Son's blood, or death is applied or imputed to us. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*. The eternal life, the eternal Son hath put on flesh and blood, and so became Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ hath shed his blood for us, or died to wash us from our sins in his own blood. His blood applied to us, discharges us from the guilt of all sin, both original and actual, inherent and committed ; and so far we stand righteous in his sight : And not only so, but his blood procures for us those sacred influences by which sin is to be subdued more and more, till it is quite abolished, *Gal. iii. 13, 14*.

8. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us. 9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a lyer, and his word is not in us.

The apostle having supposed, that even they of this heavenly communion, have yet their sin, proceeds here to justify that supposition ; and that he does by shewing the dreadful consequences of denying it ; and that in two particulars. 1. *If we say we have no sin, we deceive our selves, and the truth is not in us*, ver. 8. We must beware of self-deceit. We must beware of deceiving our selves in denying or excusing our sins. The more we see them, the more we shall esteem and value the remedy. *If we deny them, the truth*

*is not in us* : Either the truth that is contrary to such denial ; we lie in denying our sin : or the truth of religion is not in us. The Christian religion is the religion of sinners ; of such as have sinned, and in whom sin, in some measure still dwells. The Christian life is a life of continued repentance, humiliation for, and mortification of sin ; of continual faith in, thankfulness for, and love to the Redeemer, and hopeful, joyful expectation of a day of glorious redemption, in which the believer shall be fully and finally acquitted, and sin abolished for ever. 2. *If we say we have not sinned, we make him a lyer, and his word is not in us*, ver. 10. The denial of our sin does not only deceive our selves, but reflect dishonour upon God. It challenges his veracity. He has abundantly testified of, and testified against the sin of the world. *And the Lord said in his heart* (*i. e.* determined thus with himself) *I will not again curse the ground* (as he had then lately done) *for man's sake ; for* (or with the learned bishop Patrick, though) *the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth*, Gen. viii. 21. But God has given his testimony to the continued sin and sinfulness of the world, by his providing a sufficient, effectual sacrifice for sin, that will be needed in all ages ; and to the continued sinfulness of believers themselves, by requiring them continually to confess their sins, and apply themselves by faith to the blood of that sacrifice. And therefore, if we say, either that we have not sinned or do not yet sin, *the word of God is not in us*, either in our minds, as to the acquaintance we should have with it, or in our hearts, as to the practical influence it should have upon us.

The apostle then instructs the believers in the way to the continued pardon of his sin. Where we have, 1. His duty in order thereto. *If we confess our sins*, ver. 9. Penitent confession and acknowledgment of sin is the believer's business, and the means of his deliverance from its guilt. And, 2. His encouragement thereto, and assurance of the happy issue. This is the veracity, righteousness and clemency of God, to whom he makes such confession. *He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*, ver. 9. God is faithful to his covenant and word, who has therein promised forgiveness to penitent, believing confessors. He is just to himself and his glory, who has provided such a sacrifice, by which his righteousness is declared in the justification of sinners. He is just to his Son, who has (not only sent him for such service, but) promised to him, that those that come through him shall be forgiven on his account. *By his knowledge* (by the believing apprehension of him) *shall my righteous servant justify many*, Isa. liii. 11. He is clement and gracious also, and so will forgive, to the contrite confessor, all his sins, cleanse him from the guilt of all unrighteousness ; and in due time deliver him from the power and practice of it.

## CHAP. II.

Here the apostle encourages against sins of infirmity, ver. 1, 2. Shews the true knowledge and love of God, ver. 3,—6. Renews the precept of fraternal love, ver. 7,—11. Addresses to the several ages of Christians, ver. 12,—14. Warns against worldly love, ver. 15,—17. Against seducers, ver. 18, 19. Shews the security of true Christians, ver. 20,—27. And advises to abide in Christ, ver. 28, 29.

1. **M**Y little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous : 2. And he is the propitiation for our sins : and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

These verses relate to the concluding subjects of the foregoing chapter, in which the apostle proceeds upon the supposition of the real Christian's sin. And here he gives them both dissuasion and support. 1. Dissuasion. He would leave no room for sin. *My little children ! these things write I unto you, that ye sin not*, ver. 1. The design and purport of this letter, the design of what I have newly said concerning communion with God, and the overthrow of it by an irreligious course, is to dissuade and drive you from sin. See the familiar, loving compellation with which he introduces his admonition : *My little children !* Children, as having perhaps been begotten by his gospel. *Little children !* as being much beneath him in age and experience. *My little children !* as being dear to him in the bonds of the gospel. Certainly the gospel most prevailed where and when such ministerial love most abounded ; or, perhaps, the judicious reader will find reason to think that the apostle's meaning in this dissuasion or caution is this, or amounts to this reading : *These things write I unto you, not that ye sin*. And so the words will look back to what he had said before concerning the assured pardon of sin ; *God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins*, &c. chap. i. 9. And so the words are a preclusion of all abuse of such favour and indulgence. Though sins will be forgiven to penitent confessors, yet this I write, not to encourage you in sin, but upon another account ; or this clause will look forward to what the apostle is going to say about the advocate for sinners ; and so it is a prolepsis, a prevention of like mistake or abuse. *These things write I unto you, not that ye sin*, but that ye may see your remedy for sin. And so the following particle (as the learned know) may be rendered adversatively. *But if a man sin*, he may know his help and cure. And so we see, 2. The believer's support and relief in case of sin. *And* (or but) *if any man sin*, (any of us, or of our fore said communion)



*we have an advocate with the father, &c. ver. 1.* Believers themselves, those that are advanced to an happy, gospel state, have yet their sins. There is a great distinction therefore between the sinners that are in the world. There are christianized (such as are instated in the sacred, saving privileges of Christ's mystical, or spiritual body) and unchristianized; converted, and unconverted sinners. There are some, who, though they really sin, yet in comparison with others, are said not to sin; as *chap. iii. 9.* Believers, as they have an atonement applied unto them, at their entrance into a state of pardon and justification, so they have an advocate in heaven still to continue to them that state, and procure their continued pardon and forgiveness. And this must be the support, satisfaction and refuge of believers (or real Christians) in or upon their sins. *We have an advocate;* The original name is sometimes given to the holy Ghost; and then it is rendred, *the Comforter.* He acts within us; he puts pleas and arguments into our hearts and mouths; and so is our advocate, by teaching us to intercede for ourselves. But here is an advocate without us, in heaven and with the Father. The proper office and business of an advocate is with the judge; with him he pleads the client's cause. The judge with whom our advocate pleads, is the Father; his Father and ours. He that was our judge in the legal court (the court of the violated law) is our Father in the gospel court, the court of heaven and grace. His throne or tribunal is the mercy-seat. And he that is our Father, is also our Judge; the supreme arbitrator of our state and circumstances, either for life or death, for time or eternity. *Ye are come—to God, the judge of all, Heb. xii. 23.* That believers may be encouraged to hope that their cause will go well, as their judge is represented to them in the relation of a Father so their advocate is recommended to them upon these considerations: 1. By his person and personal names. *It is Jesus Christ the Son of the Father;* one anointed by the Father for the whole office of mediation, the whole work of salvation; and consequently for that of the intercessor or advocate. 2. By his qualification for the office. *It is Jesus Christ, the righteous;* the righteous one in the court, and sight of the judge. This is not so necessary in another advocate. Another advocate (or an advocate in another court) may be an unjust person himself, and yet may have a just cause (and the cause of a just person in that case) to plead, and may accordingly carry his cause. But here the clients are guilty; their innocence and legal righteousness cannot be pleaded; their sin must be confessed or supposed. It is the advocate's own righteousness that he must plead for the criminals. He has been righteous to the death; righteous for them, brought in everlasting righteousness. This the judge will not deny. Upon this score he pleads, that the clients sins may be disimputed, and discounted to them. 3. By the plea he has to make; the ground and basis of his advocacy. *And he is the propitiation of our sins, ver. 2.* He is the expiatory victim, the propitiatory sacrifice that has been offered to the judge for all our offences against his majesty, and law and government. In vain do the professors of Rome distinguish between an advocate of redemption, and an advocate of intercession, or a mediator of such different service. The mediator of intercession, the advocate for us is the mediator of redemption, the propitiation for our sins. It is his propitiation that he pleads. And we might be apt to suppose, that his blood had lost its value and efficacy, were no mention made of it in heaven since the time it was shed. But now we see that it is of esteem there, since it is continually represented in the intercession of the great Advocate (the Attorney-General) for the church of God. *He ever lives to make intercession for those that come to God through him.* 4. By the extent of his plea; the latitude of his propitiation. It is not confined to one nation; and not particularly to the ancient Israel of God. *He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only* (not only for the sins of us Jews; us, that are Abraham's seed, according to the flesh) *but also for those of the whole world, ver. 2.* Not only for the past, or us present believers, but for the sins of all that shall hereafter believe on him, or come to God through him. The extent and intent of the Mediator's death reaches to all tribes, nations and countries. As he is the only, so he is the universal atonement and propitiation for all that are saved, and brought home to God. and to his favour and forgiveness.

3. And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a lyer, and the truth is not in him. 5. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. 6. He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

These verses may seem to relate to the seventh verse of the former chapter, between which, and these verses, there occurred an incidental discourse concerning the believer's duty and relief in case of sin, occasioned by the mention of one of the believer's privileges, viz. his being cleansed from sin by the Mediator's blood: In that verse the apostle asserts the beneficial consequence of *walking in the light, we have then fellowship with one another;* such divine fellowship and communion as is the prerogative of the church of Christ: Here now succeeds the trial or test of our light, and of our love: 1. The trial of our light: *And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments, ver. 3.* Divine light and knowledge

is the beauty and improvement of the mind; it becomes the disciples of the Mediator to be persons of wisdom and understanding: Young Christians are apt to magnify their new light, and applaud their own knowledge, especially if it has been suddenly, or in a short time communicated; and old ones are apt to suspect the sufficiency and fulness of their knowledge; they lament that they know God and Christ, and the rich contents of his gospel no more: But here is the evidence of the soundness of our knowledge, if it constrain us to *keep God's commands;* each perfection of his nature inforces his authority; the wisdom of his counsels, the riches of his grace, the grandeur of his works, recommend his law and government; a careful, conscientious obedience to his commands shews that the apprehension and knowledge of these things is graciously impressed upon the soul; and thereupon it must follow in the reverse, that *he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a lyer, and the truth is not in him, ver. 4.* Professors of the truth are oft ashamed of their ignorance, or ashamed to own it; they frequently pretend to great attainments in the knowledge of divine mysteries: *Thou makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest* (in thy rational judgment) *the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law, and art confident that thou thyself art* (or art fit to be) *a guide to the blind, &c. Rom. ii. 17, &c.* But what knowledge of God can that be, that sees not that he is most worthy of the most intire and intense obedience? And if that be seen and known, how vain and superficial is even that knowledge, when it sways not the heart unto obedience? A disobedient life is the confutation and shame of pretended religious knowledge; it gives the lye to such boasts and pretences, and shews that there is neither religion nor honesty in them.

2. The trial of our love: *But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him, ver. 5.* To keep the word of God, or of Christ, is sacredly to attend thereto in all the conduct and motion of life; in him that does so, is the love of God perfected. Possibly, some may here understand God's love to us; to be sure his love to us cannot be perfected (or obtain its perfect design and fruit) without our practical observance of his word; we are chosen to be holy and blameless before him in love; we are redeemed to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works; we are pardoned and justified, that we may be partakers of larger measures of the divine Spirit for sanctification; we are sanctified, that we may walk in ways of holiness and obedience; no act of divine love, that here terminates upon us, obtains its proper tendency, issue, and effect, without our holy attendance to God's word; but the phrase rather denotes here our love to God; so *ver. 15.* *The love of* (i. e. to) *the Father is not in him;* so *chap. iii. 17.* *How dwelleth the love of* (i. e. to) *God in him?* Now light is to kindle love; and love must, and will, keep the word of God; it inquires wherein the beloved may be pleased and served, and finding he will be so by an observance of his declared will, there it employs and exerts itself; there love is demonstrated; there it has its perfect (or compleat) exercise, operation, and delight; and hereby (by this dutiful attendance to the will of God, or Christ) *we know that we are in him, ver. 5.* *we know that we* belong to him, and that we are united to him by that Spirit that elevates and affixes us to this obedience; and if we acknowledge our relation to him, and our union with him, it must have this continued inforcement upon us: *He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself to walk, as he walked, ver. 6.* The Lord Christ was an inhabitant of this world, and resided here below; here he gave a shining example of abiding obedience to God; they that profess to be on his side, and to abide with him, must walk with him, walk after his pattern and example: The partisans of the several sects of philosophers of old paid great regard to the dictates and practice of their respective teachers and sect-masters, much more should the Christian (he that professes to abide in, and with Christ) aim to resemble his infallible Master and Head, and conform to his course and prelections: *Then are ye my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you, John xv. 14.*

7. Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. 8. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. 9. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. 10. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. 11. But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes.

This seventh verse may be supposed, either to look backward to what immediately preceded, and then it is *walking as Christ walked* that is here represented as *no new, but an old commandment;* it is that that the apostles would certainly inculcate wherever they brought Christ's gospel; or to look forward to what the apostle is now going to recommend, and that is the law of fraternal love; this is the message heard from the beginning, *chap. iii. 11.* and the



*old commandment*, 2 John 5. Now while the apostle addresses himself to the recommendation of such a practice, he is ready to give an instance thereof in his affectionate appellation; *Brethren*; you that are dear to me in the bond of that love to which I would solicit you; and so the precept of fraternal love is recommended.

1. An old one: *I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning*, ver. 7. The precept of love must be as old as human nature, but it might admit divers enactments, enforcements, and motives: In the state of innocence, had human nature then been propagated, men must have loved one another, as being of one blood, made to dwell on the earth, as being God's offspring, and bearing his image: In the state of sin, and promised recovery, they must love one another, as related to God their maker, as related to each other by blood, and as partners in the same hope. When the Hebrews were peculiarly incorporated, they must, accordingly, love each other, as being the privileged people, whose were the covenants and the adoption, and of whose race the Messiah, and head of the church must spring; and the law of love must be conveyed, with new obligations, to the new Israel of God, to the gospel church; and so it is *the old commandment*, or *the word which the children of the gospel Israel have heard from the beginning*, ver. 7.

2. As a new one: *Again, to constrain you to this duty the more, a new commandment I write unto you, the law of the new society, the Christian corporation, which thing is true in him*; the matter of which was first true in and concerning the head of it, the truth of it was first, and was abundantly in him; *he loved the church, and gave himself for it; and in you*; this law is, in some measure, written upon your hearts; ye are taught of God to love one another, and that *because* (or *since*, or *forasmuch as*) *the darkness is past, the darkness of your prejudiced, unconverted (whether Jewish or Gentile) minds, your deplorable ignorance of God and of his Christ is now past, and the true light now shineth*, ver. 8. *the light of evangelical revelation hath shone with life and efficacy into your hearts*; hence you have seen the excellency of Christian love, and the fundamental obligations thereto; hence we see the fundamentals (and particularly the fundamental precepts) of the Christian religion may be represented either as new or old; the reformed doctrine, or doctrine of religion in the reformed churches, is new and old; new, as taught, after long darkness, by the lights of the reformation; new, as purged from the adulterations of Rome; but old, as having been taught and *heard from the beginning*: We should see that that grace or virtue that was true in Christ, should be true also in us; we should be conformable to our head; the more our darkness is past, and gospel light shines into us, the deeper should our subjection be to the commandments of our Lord, whether considered as old or new.

Light should produce a suitable heat: Accordingly, here is another trial of our Christian light; before, it was to be approved by obedience to God; here, by Christian love: 1. He that wants such love, in vain pretends his light: *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now*, ver. 9. It is proper for sincere Christians to acknowledge what God has done for their souls; but in the visible church there are oft those that assume to themselves more than is true; there are those that say they are *in the light*, the divine revelation has made its impression upon their minds and spirits, and yet they walk in hatred and enmity towards their Christian brethren; these cannot be swayed by the sense of the love of Christ to their brethren, and therefore remain in their dark state, notwithstanding their pretended conversion to Christian religion. 2. He that is managed by such love, approves his light to be good and genuine: *He that loveth his brother (as his brother in Christ) abideth in the light*, ver. 10. He sees the foundation and reason of Christian love; he discerns the weight and value of the Christian redemption; he sees how meet it is that we should love those whom Christ hath loved; and then the consequence will be, that *there is no occasion of stumbling in him*, ver. 10. he will be no scandal, *no stumbling-block to his brother*; he will conscientiously beware that he neither induce his brother to sin, nor turn him out of the way of religion; Christian love teaches us highly to value our brother's soul, and dread every thing that will be injurious to his innocence and peace. 3. Hatred is a sign of spiritual darkness: *But he that hateth his brother is in darkness*, ver. 11. Spiritual light is infused by the Spirit of grace, and one of *the first fruits of that Spirit is love*; he then that is possessed with malignity towards the Christian brother, must needs be destitute of spiritual light, consequently *he walks in darkness*, ver. 11. his life is agreeable to a dark mind and conscience, *and he knows not whither he goes*; he sees not whither this dark spirit carries him, and, particularly, that it will carry him to the world of outer darkness, *because that darkness hath blinded his eyes*, ver. 11. The darkness of unregeneracy, evidenced by a malignant spirit, is contrary to the light of life; where that darkness dwells, the mind, the judgment, and the conscience will be darkened, and so will mistake the way to heavenly, endless life. Here we may observe how effectually our apostle is now cured of his once hot and flaming spirit: Time was when he was for calling fire from heaven upon poor ignorant Samaritans that received them not, *Luce ix. 5*. But his Lord had shewed him that he knew not his own spirit, nor whither it led him: Having now imbibed more of the Spirit of Christ, he breathes out good-will to man,

and love to all the brethren: It is the Lord Jesus that is the great Master of love; it is his school (his own church) that is the school of love: His disciples are the disciples of love, and his family must be the family of love.

12. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his names sake. 13. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. 14. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you; and ye have overcome the wicked one. 15. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doth the will of God, abideth for ever.

This new command of holy love, with the incentives thereto, may possibly be directed to the several ranks of disciples that are here accosted; the several graduates in the Christian university, the catholick church, must be sure to preserve the bond of sacred love; or, there being an important dehortation and dissuasion to follow, without the observance of which, vital religion, in the love of God, and love of the brethren cannot subsist, the apostle may justly seem to preface it with a solemn address to the several forms or orders in the school of Christ; let the infants, or minors, the adult, the seniors (or the *adepts*, the *τέλειοι*, the most perfect) in the Christian institution, know that they must *not love this world*; and so,

1. We have the address itself made to the various forms and ranks in the church of Christ; all Christians are not of the same standing and stature; there are babes in Christ; there are grown men, and old disciples; as these have their peculiar states, so they have their peculiar duties; but there is precept and obedience that is common to them all, as particularly mutual love and contempt of the world: We see also that wise pastors will judiciously distribute the word of life, and give to the several members of Christ's family their several suitable portions: *I write unto you, children, fathers, and young men*. In this distribution the apostle addresses, 1. To the lowest in the Christian school: *I write unto you, little children*, ver. 12. There are novices in religion, babes in Christ, those that are learning the rudiments of Christian godliness: The apostle may seem to encourage them, by applying to them first; and it may be useful to the greater proficients to hear what is said to their juniors; elements are to be repeated; first principles are the foundation of all: He addresses *to the children* in Christianity upon two accounts: (1.) *Because their sins were forgiven them for his name's sake*, ver. 12. The youngest sincere disciple is pardoned; *the communion of saints* is attended with *the forgiveness of sins*; *sins are forgiven*, either *for God's name's sake*, for the praise of his glory, his glorious perfections displayed in forgiveness, or *for Christ's name's sake*, i. e. upon his score, and upon the account of the redemption that is in him; and they that are forgiven of God, are strongly obliged to relinquish this world, which so interferes with *the love of God*. (2.) *Because of their knowledge of God: I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father*, ver. 13. *Children* are wont to know none so soon as their father; *children* in Christianity must, and do know God: *They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest*, Heb. viii. 11. *Children* in Christ should know that God is their Father; it is their wisdom: We say, It is a wise child that knows his father; these *children* cannot but know theirs; they can well be assured by whose power they are regenerate, and by whose grace they are adopted; they that *know the Father*, may well be withdrawn from *the love of this world*. Then the apostle proceeds, 2. To those of the highest station and stature; to the seniors in Christianity; to whom he gives an honourable appellation: *I write unto you, fathers*, ver. 13, 14. *to you, Mnaseus, you old disciples*, Acts xxi. 16. The apostle immediately passes from the bottom to the top of the school, from the lowest form to the highest, that they in the middle may hear both lessons, may remember what they have learned, and perceive what they must come to: *I write unto you, fathers*. They that are of longest standing in Christ's school, have need of farther advice and instruction; the oldest disciple must go to heaven, the university above, with his book (his bible) in his hand; *fathers* must be *wrote unto*, preached unto; none too old to learn; he *writes to them* upon the account of their knowledge: *I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning*, ver. 13, 14. Old men have knowledge and experience, and expect deference thereupon: The apostle is ready to own the knowledge of old Christians, and to congratulate them thereupon: They know the Lord Christ, particularly *him that was from the beginning*; as *chap. i. 1*. As Christ is *alpha* and *omega*, so he must be the beginning and end of our Christian knowledge. *I count all things*



things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, Phil. iii. 8. They that know him that was from the beginning, before this world was made, may well be induced thereby to relinquish this world. Then, 3. To the middle age of Christians; to those that are in their bloom and flower. *I write unto you, young men*, ver. 13, 14. There are the adult in Christ Jesus, those that are arrived to the strength of spirit, and sound sense, can discern between good and evil. The apostle applies to them upon these accounts: 1. Upon the account of their martial exploits. *Dextrous soldiers* they are in the camp of Christ; *because ye have overcome the wicked one*, ver. 13. There is a wicked one that is continually warring against souls, and particularly against the disciples: But they that are grown in Christ's school, can handle their arms, and vanquish the evil one: And they that can vanquish him, may be called to vanquish the world too, which is so great an instrument for the devil. 2. Upon the account of their strength, discovered in this their achievement; *because ye are strong, and ye have overcome the wicked one*, ver. 14. *Young men* are wont to glory in their strength; it will be the glory of youthful persons to be strong in Christ, and in his grace; it will be their glory, and it will try their strength to overcome the devil; if they are not too hard for the devil, he will be too hard for them; let vigorous Christians shew their strength in conquering the world; and the same strength must be exerted in overcoming this world, as is employed in overcoming the devil. 3. Because of their acquaintance with the word of God; *and the word of God abideth in you*, ver. 14. *The word of God* must abide in the adult disciples; it is the nutriment and supply of strength to them; it is the weapon by which they overcome the wicked one; *the sword of the Spirit, whereby they quench his fiery darts*: And they, in whom *the word of God dwells*, are well furnished for the conquest of the world.

2. We have the dehortation or dissuasion thus prefaced and introduced; a caution fundamental to vital, practical religion; *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world*, ver. 15. Be crucified to the world, be mortified to the things, to the affairs and enticements of it; the several degrees of Christians should unite in this, in being dead to the world; were they thus united, they would soon unite upon other accounts: The love should be reserved for God; throw it not away upon the world. Now here we see the reasons of this dissuasion and caution, and they are several, and had need to be so; it is hard to dispute or dissuade disciples themselves from the love of the world; the first is taken from the inconsistency of this love with the love of God: *If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*, ver. 15. The heart of man is narrow, and cannot contain both loves; the world draws down the heart from God; and so the more the love of the world prevails, the more the love of God dwindles and decays. The second is taken from the prohibition of worldly love or lust; it is not ordained of God; *it is not of the Father, but is of the world*, ver. 16. this love or lust is not appointed of God, he calls us from it, but it intrudes itself from the world; the world is an usurper of our affection: Now here we have the due consideration and notion of the world, according to which it is to be crucified and renounced: *The world*, physically considered, is good; and is to be admired as the work of God, and a glass in which his perfections shine; but it is to be considered in its relation to us now in our corrupted state, and as it works upon our weakness, and instigates and inflames our vile affection; there is great affinity and alliance between this world and the flesh, and this world intrudes and incroaches upon the flesh, and thereby makes a party against God; the things of the world therefore are distinguished into three classes, according to the three predominant inclinations of depraved nature; as, 1. There is the lust of the flesh; the flesh here, being distinguished from the eyes, and the life, imports the body; the lust of the flesh is, subjectively, the humour and appetite of indulging fleshly pleasures; and, objectively, all those things that excite and inflame the pleasures of the flesh; this lust is usually called luxury. 2. There is the lust of the eyes; the eyes are delighted with treasures; riches, and rich possessions, are craved by an extravagant eye; this is the lust of covetousness. 3. There is the pride of life; a vain mind craves all the grandeur, equipage, and pomp of a vain-glorious life; this is ambition and thirst after honour and applause; this is, in part, the disease of the ear; it must be flattered with admiration and praise. The objects of these appetites must be abandoned and renounced; as they engage and engross the affection and desire, *they are not of the Father, but of the world*, ver. 16. *The Father* disallows them, and the world should keep them to itself: The lust and appetite to these things must be mortified and subdued; and so the indulging of it is not appointed by the Father, but is insinuated by the ensnaring world. The third is taken from the vain and vanishing state of earthly things, and the enjoyment of them: *And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof*, ver. 17. The things of the world are fading, and dying apace; the lust itself, and the pleasure of it, withers and decays; desire itself will, ere long, fail and cease, *Eccles. xii. 5*. And what is become of all the pomp and pleasure of all those that now lie mouldering in the grave? The fourth from the immortality of the divine lover, the lover of God: *But he that doth the will of God, which must be the character of the lover of God, in opposition to this lover of the world, abideth for ever*, ver. 17. the object of his love, in opposition to the world that passeth away, abideth for ever;

his sacred passion or affection, in opposition to the lust that passeth away, *abideth for ever*; love shall never fail; and he himself is an heir of immortality and endless life, and shall in time be translated thither. From the whole of these verses, we should observe the purity and spirituality of the apostolical doctrine; the animal life must be subjected to the divine; the body, with its affections, should be subjugated to the soul; the soul should be swayed by religion, or the victorious love of God.

18. Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. 19. They went out from us, but they were not of us: for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest, that they were not all of us.

Here is, 1. A moral prognostication of the time; the end is coming: *Little children, it is the last time*, ver. 18. Some may suppose that the apostle here addresses to the first rank of Christians again; the juniors are most apt to be seduced; and therefore, *little children*, you that are young in religion, take heed to yourselves that ye be not corrupted: But it may be, as elsewhere, an universal appellation, introductive of an alarm to all Christians; *Little children, it is the last time*; our Jewish polity in church and state is hastening to an end; the Mosaic institution and discipline is just upon its vanishing away; Daniel's weeks are now expiring; the destruction of the Hebrew city and sanctuary approaching; *the end whereof must be with a flood, and to the end of the war desolations are determined*, Dan. ix. 26. It is meet that the disciples should be warned of the haste and end of time, and apprized, as much as may be, of the prophetick periods of time.

2. The sign of this last time: *Even now there are many antichrists*, ver. 18. many that oppose the person, and doctrine, and kingdom of Christ. It is a mysterious portion of providence that antichrists should be permitted; but when they are come, it is good and safe that the disciples should be informed of them; ministers should be watchmen to the house of Israel: Now it should be no great offence, or prejudice to the disciples, that there are such antichrists: 1. One great one has been foretold: *As ye have heard that antichrist shall come*, ver. 18. The generality of the church have been informed, by divine revelation, that there must be a long and fatal adversary to Christ and his church, 2 *Thess. ii. 8, 9, 10*. No wonder then there are many harbingers and forerunners of the great one; *even now there are many antichrists*; the mystery of iniquity already worketh. 2. They were foretold also as the sign of this last time: *For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect*, &c. *Matt. xxiv. 24*. And these were the forerunners of the dissolution of the Jewish state, nation, and religion, whereby we know it is the last time, ver. 18. Let the prediction that we see there has been of seducers arising in the Christian world, fortify us against their seduction.

3. Some account of these seducers, or antichrists, (1.) More positively; they were once entertainers or professors of apostolical doctrine; *they went out from us*, ver. 19. from our company and communion; possibly, from the church of Jerusalem, or some of the churches of Judea, as *Acts xv. 1*. *Certain men came down from Judea, and taught the brethren*, &c. The purest churches may have their apostates and revolvers; the apostolical doctrine did not convert all whom it convinced of its truth. (2.) More privately; *they were not inwardly such as we are*; but they were not of us; they had not from the heart obeyed the form of sound doctrine delivered to them; they were not of our union with Christ the head: Then here is, 1. The reason upon which it is concluded that they were not of us, were not what they pretended, or what we are, and that is their actual defection; *for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have continued with us*, ver. 19. had the sacred truth been rooted in their hearts, it would have held them with us; had they had the anointing from above, by which they had been made true and real Christians, they had not turned antichrists: They that apostatize from religion, sufficiently indicate, that, before, they were hypocrites in religion: They that have imbibed the spirit of gospel truth, have a good preservative against destructive error. 2. The reason why they are permitted thus to depart from apostolical doctrine and communion, that their insincerity may be detected; but this was done, or they went out, that they may be made manifest, that they were not all of us, ver. 19. The church knows not well who are its vital members, and who are not; and therefore the church, considered as internally sanctified, may well be styled invisible: Some of the hypocritical must be manifested here, and that for their own shame and benefit too, in their reduction to the truth, if they have not sinned unto death, and for the terror and caution of others. *We therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware, lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness: But grow in grace*, &c. 2 *Pet. iii. 17, 18*.

20. But ye have an unction from the holy One, and ye know all things. 21. I have not written unto you, because



ye know not the truth : but because ye know it, and that no lye is of the truth. 22. Who is a lyar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? he is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son. 23. Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father : (*but*) *he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also.* 24. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning, shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. 25. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, *even eternal life.* 26. These things have I written unto you, concerning them that seduce you. 27. But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you : and ye need not that any man teach you : but, as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lye : and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.

Here, 1. The apostle encourages the disciples (to whom he writes) in these dangerous times, in this hour of seducers ; he encourages them in the assurance of their stability in this day of apostasy : *But ye have an unction from the holy One, and ye know all things.* We see, 1. The blessing wherewith they were enriched, an unguent from heaven ; *ye have an unction* : True Christians are anointed ones, their name intimates as much ; they are anointed with the oil of grace, with gifts and spiritual endowments by the Spirit of grace ; they are anointed into a similitude of their Lord's offices, as subordinate prophets, priests, and kings unto God : The holy Spirit is compared unto oil, as well as to fire, or water ; and the communication of his salvific grace is our anointing. 2. From whom this blessing comes ; *from the holy One* ; either from the holy Ghost, or from the Lord Christ, as *Rev. iii. 7. These things saith he that is holy ; the holy One* : The Lord Christ is glorious in his holiness, the Lord Christ disposes of the graces of the divine Spirit, and he anoints the disciples to make them like to himself, and to secure them in his interest. 3. The effect of this unction ; it is a spiritual eye-salve ; it enlightens and strengthens the eyes of the understanding ; and, thereby, *ye know all things*, ver. 20. all these things concerning Christ, and his religion ; it was promised and given you for that end, *John xiv. 26.* The Lord Christ does not deal alike by all his professed disciples ; some are more anointed than others : There is great danger, lest those, that are not thus anointed, should be so far from being true to Christ, as that they should, on the contrary, turn antichrists, and prove adversaries to Christ's person, and kingdom, and glory.

2. The apostle indicates to them the mind and meaning with which he wrote to them : 1. By way of negation, not as suspecting their knowledge, or supposing their ignorance in the grand truths of the gospel : *I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth*, ver. 21. I could not then be so well assured of your stability therein, nor congratulate your unction from above : It is good to surmise well concerning our Christian brethren ; we ought to do so till evidence overthrows our surmise : A just confidence in religious persons may both encourage and contribute to their fidelity. 2. By way of assertion and acknowledgment, as relying upon their judgment in these things : *But because ye know it (ye know the truth in Jesus) and that no lye is of the truth.* They that know the truth in any kind, are thereby prepared to discern what is contrary thereto, and inconsistent therewith : *Rectum est index sui & obliqui*, truth and falsehood do not well mix and suit together : They that are well acquainted with Christian truth, are thereby well fortified against antichristian error and delusion : No lye belongs to religion, either natural or revealed : The apostles most of all condemned lyes, and shew the inconsistency of lyes with their doctrine : They would be the most self-condemned persons should they propagate the truth by lyes : It is a commendation of the Christian religion, that it so well accords with natural religion, which is the foundation of it, that it well accords with the Jewish religion, which contained the elements or rudiments of it : *No lye is of the truth* : Frauds and impostures then are very unfit means to support and propagate the truth : I suppose it had been better with the state of religion if they had never been used ; the result of them appears in the infidelity of our age ; the detection of ancient pious frauds and wiles has almost run our age into atheism and irreligion ; but the greatest actors and sufferers for the Christian revelation would assure us, that *no lye is of the truth.*

3. The apostle further impleads and arraigns these seducers that were newly arisen : 1. They are lyers, egregious opposers of sacred truth : *Who is a lyer*, or the lyer, the notorious lyer of the time and age in which we live, *but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?* The great and pernicious lyes that *the father of lyes*, or of lyers, spreads in the world, were of old, and usually are, falsehoods and errors relating to the person of Christ : There is no truth so sacred and fully attested, but some or other will contradict or deny it : That *Jesus of Nazareth was the Son and the Christ of God*, had been attested by heaven, and earth, and hell : It should seem that some, in the tremendous judgment of God, are given up to strong delusions. 2. They are direct enemies to God, as well as to the Lord Christ : *He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son*, ver. 22. He that opposes Christ, denies the witness and testimony of the

Father, and the seal that he hath given to his Son ; *for him hath God the Father sealed*, John vi. 27. And he that denies the witness and testimony of the Father concerning Jesus Christ, denies that God is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ ; and, consequently, abandons the knowledge of God in Christ ; and thereupon the whole revelation of God in Christ, and particularly of God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself ; and therefore the apostle may well infer, *Whosoever denies the Son, the same hath not the Father*, ver. 23. he hath not the true knowledge of the Father ; for the Son hath most and best revealed him ; he hath no interest in the Father, in his favour, and grace, and salvation ; *for none cometh to the Father, but by the Son* : But, as some copies add, *he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also*, ver. 23. As there is an intimate relation between the Father and the Son, so there is an inviolable union in the doctrine, knowledge, and interests of them both ; so that he that hath the knowledge of, and right to, the Son, hath the knowledge of, and right to, the Father also : They that adhere to the Christian revelation, hold the light and benefit of natural religion withal.

4. Hereupon the apostle adviseth and perswadeth the disciples to continue in the old doctrine at first communicated to them : *Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning*, ver. 24. Truth is older than error : The truth concerning Christ, that was at first delivered to the saints, is not to be exchanged for novelties : So sure were the apostles of the truth of what they had delivered concerning Christ, and from him, that after all their toils and sufferings, they were not willing to relinquish it : The Christian truth may plead antiquity, and be recommended thereby : This exhortation is enforced by these considerations : 1. From the sacred advantage they will receive by adhering to the primitive truth and faith : (1.) They will continue thereby in holy union with God and Christ : *If that which ye have heard from the beginning, shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father*, ver. 24. It is the truth of Christ abiding in us, that is the means of severing us from sin, and uniting us to the Son of God, *John xv. 3, 4.* It is the Son is the medium, or mediator, by whom we are united to the Father : What value then should we put upon gospel truth ? (2.) They will thereby secure the promise of eternal life : *And this is the promise that he (even God the Father, chap. v. 11.) hath promised us, even eternal life*, ver. 25. Great is the promise that God makes to his faithful adherents ; it is suitable to his own greatness, power, and goodness ; it is eternal life, which none but God can give : It is great value that the blessed God puts upon his Son, and the truth relating to him, that he is pleased to promise to those that continue in that truth (*i. e.* under the light, and power, and influence of it) eternal life. Then the exhortation aforesaid is enforced, 2. From the design of the apostle's writing to them : This letter is to fortify them against the deceivers of the age : *These things have I written to you, concerning them that seduce you*, ver. 26. and therefore, if you continue not in what you have heard from the beginning, my writing and service will be in vain. We should beware lest the apostolical letters, yea, lest the whole scripture of God should be to us insignificant and fruitless. *I have written to him the great things of my law (and my gospel too) but they were counted as a strange thing*, Hof. viii. 12. 3. From the instructive blessing they had received from heaven : *But the anointing which ye have received from him, abideth in you*, ver. 27. True Christians have an inward confirmation of the divine truth they have imbibed : The holy Spirit has imprinted it on their minds and hearts : It is meet the Lord Jesus should have a constant witness in the hearts of his disciples : The unction, the pouring out of the gifts of grace upon sincere disciples, is a seal to the truth and doctrine of Christ ; since none giveth that seal but God : *Now he who stablisheth us with you (and you with us) in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God*, 2 Cor. i. 21. This sacred chrism, or divine unction, is commended on these accounts : 1. It is durable and lasting ; oil or unguent is not so soon dried up as water ; it *abideth in you*, ver. 27. Divine illumination, in order to confirmation, must be something continued, or constant ; temptations, snares, and seductions arise, *the anointing must abide*. 2. It is better than human instruction : *And ye need not that any man teach you*, ver. 27. Not that this anointing will teach you without the appointed ministry ; it could, if God so pleased ; but it will not ; but will teach you better than we can ; and ye need not that any man teach you, ver. 27. Ye were instructed by us before ye were anointed ; but now our teaching is nothing in comparison to that : *Who teacheth like him?* Job xxxvi. 22. The divine unction does not supersede ministerial teaching, but surmount it. 3. It is a sure evidence of truth ; and all that it teacheth is infallible truth : *But as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lye*, ver. 27. The holy Spirit must needs be the Spirit of truth, as he is called, *John xiv. 26.* The instruction and illumination that he affords, must needs be in, and of the truth : *The Spirit of truth will not lie* : And he *teacheth all things*, *i. e.* all things in the present dispensation, all things necessary to our knowledge of God in Christ, and their glory in the gospel : And, 4. It is of a conservative influence ; it will preserve those in whom it abides against seducers, and their seduction : *And even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him*, ver. 27. It teaches you to abide in Christ ; and, as it teaches you, it secures you : It lays a restraint upon your minds and hearts, that you may not revolt from him ;



and hath anointed us, is God; who also hath sealed us, for himself, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts, 2 Cor. i. 21, 22.

28. And now, little children, abide in him; that when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. 29. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doth righteousness, is born of him.

From the blessing of the sacred unction, the apostle proceeds in his advice and exhortation to constancy in, and with Christ. *And now, little children, abide in him*, ver. 28. The apostle repeats his kind appellation, *little children*: Which, I suppose, does not so much denote the diminutiveness of them, as the affection of him; and therefore, I judge, may be rendered, *dear children*! He would persuade by love, and prevail by endearment, as well as by reason. Not only the love of Christ, but the love of you constrains us to inculcate your perseverance, and that *you would abide in him*, in the truth relating to his person, and in your union with him, and allegiance to him. Evangelical privileges are obligatory to evangelical duties. And they that are anointed by the Lord Jesus, are highly obliged to abide with him in opposition to all adversaries whatever. And this duty of perseverance and constancy in trying times, is strongly urged by two following considerations. 1. From the consideration of his return at the great day of account. *That when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him, at his coming*, ver. 28. It is here taken for granted, that the Lord Jesus will come again. This was part of that truth they had heard from the beginning. And when he comes again, he will publicly appear; be manifested to all. When he was here before, he came privately (in comparison.) He proceeded from a womb, and was introduced into a stable. But when he comes again, he will come from the opened heavens; and every eye shall see him: And then they that have continued with him throughout all their temptations, shall have confidence, assurance and joy in the sight of him. They shall lift up their heads with unspeakable triumph, as knowing that their compleat redemption comes along with him. On the contrary, they that have deserted him, *shall be ashamed before him*; they shall be ashamed of themselves, ashamed of their unbelief, their cowardise, ingratitude, temerity and folly in forsaking so glorious a redeemer. They shall be ashamed of their hopes, expectations and pretences; and ashamed of all the wages of unrighteousness, by which they were induced to desert him. *That we may have confidence, and we may not be ashamed*. The apostle includes himself in the number. Let not us be ashamed of you, as well as you will not be ashamed of your selves. Or, *μη ἀισχυθῶμεν ἀπ' αὐτῶν*, that we be not ashamed (i. e. made ashamed, or put to shame) by him, at his coming. At his publick appearance, he will shame all those that have abandoned him; he will disclaim all acquaintance with him; will cover them with shame and confusion; will abandon them to darkness, devils, and endless despair, by professing before men and angels, that he is ashamed of them, *Mark viii.* 38. Now to the same advice and exhortation, he proceeds,

2. From the consideration of the dignity of those that still adhere to Christ and his religion. *If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doth righteousness, is born of him*, ver. 29. The particle here rendered, *if*, seems not to be *vox dubitantis*, but *concedentis*; not so much a conditional particle, as a suppositional one (if I may call it so;) a note of allowance or confession; and so seems to be of the same import with our English inasmuch, or whereas, or since. So the sense runs more clear. *Since ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doth righteousness, is born of him*. He that doth righteousness, may here be justly enough assumed as another name for him that abideth in Christ. For he that abideth in Christ, abideth in the law and love of Christ; and consequently, in his allegiance and obedience to him; and so must do, or work, or practise righteousness, or the parts of gospel-holiness. Now such a one must be born of him. He is renewed by the Spirit of Christ, after the image of Christ. *Created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath foreordained, that they should walk in them*, *Eph. ii.* 10. *Since then you know that the Lord Christ is righteous*, (righteous in his quality and capacity; the Lord our righteousness, and the Lord our sanctifier, or our sanctification; as *1 Cor. i.* 30.) ye cannot but know thereupon, or know ye, it is for our consideration and regard, that he that, by the continued practice of Christianity, abideth in him, is born of him. The new spiritual nature is derived from the Lord Christ. He that is constant to the practice of religion in trying times, gives good evidence that he is born from above, from the Lord Christ. The Lord Christ is an everlasting Father. It is a great privilege and dignity to be born of him. They that are so, are the children of God. *To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God*, *Joh. i.* 11. And this introduces the context of the following chapter.

## C H A P. III.

The apostle here magnifies the love of God in our adoption, ver. 1, 2. He thereupon argues for holiness, ver. 3. And against sin, ver. 4. — 10. He presseth brotherly love, ver. 11, 12, — 18. How to assure our hearts before God, ver. 19, — 22. The precept of faith, ver. 23. And the good of obedience, ver. 24.

1. **B**Ehold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. 2. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. 3. And every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

The apostle having shewn the dignity of Christ's faithful followers, that they are born of him, and thereby nearly allied to God, now here, 1. Breaks forth into the admiration of that grace that is the spring of such a wonderful vouchsafement. Behold (see ye, observe) *what manner of love*, or how great love, *the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called*, effectually called; he that calls things that are not, makes them to be what they were not, *the sons of God*! The Father adopts all the children of the Son. The Son indeed calls them, and makes them his brethren; and thereby he confers upon them the power and dignity of the sons of God. It is wonderful, condescending love of the eternal Father, that such as we should be made and called his sons; we that by nature are heirs of sin and guilt, and the curse of God! We, that by practice are children of corruption, disobedience and ingratitude! Strange, that the holy God is not ashamed to be called our Father, and to call us his sons! Thence the apostle, 2. Infers the honour of believers above the cognizance of the world: Unbelievers know little of them. Therefore, or wherefore, upon this score, *the world knoweth us not*, ver. 1. Little does the world perceive the advancement and happiness of the genuine followers of Christ. They are here exposed to the common calamities of earth and time; all things fall alike to them as to others, unless they are subject to the greater sorrow: for they have oft reason to say, *if in this life only we had hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable*, *1 Cor. xv.* 19. The unchristian world, therefore, that walks by sight, knows not their dignity, their privileges, the enjoyments they have in hand, or what they are intitled to. Little does the world think, that these poor, humble, contemned ones are the favourites of heaven, and will be inhabitants there ere long. And they may bear their case the better, since their Lord was here unknown, as well as they. *Because it knew him not*, ver. 1. Little did the world think how great a person was once sojourning here; that the maker of it was once an inhabitant of it. Little did the Jewish world think that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was one of their blood, and dwelt in their land; he came to his own, and his own received him not. He came to his own, and his own crucified him; but surely, had they known him, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, *2 Cor. ii.* 8. Let the followers of Christ be content with hard fare here, since they are in a land of strangers, among those that little know them, and their Lord was so treated before them. Then the apostle, 3. Exalts these persevering disciples in the prospect of the certain revelation of their state and dignity. Where, 1. Their present, honourable relation is asserted. Beloved, ye may well be our beloved, for ye are beloved of God, *now are we the sons of God*, ver. 2. We have the nature of sons by regeneration: We have the title, and spirit, and right to the inheritance of sons by adoption. *This honour have all the saints*. 2. The discovery of the bliss belonging, and suitable to this relation is denied. *And it doth not yet appear what we shall be*, ver. 2. The glory pertaining to the sonship and adoption is adjourned and reserved for another world. The discovery of it here would put a stop to the current of affairs, that must now proceed. The sons of God must walk by faith, and live by hope. 3. The time of the revelation of the sons of God in their proper state and glory is determined; and that is when their elder brother comes to call and collect them all together. *But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him*. That the particle *εἰ*, usually translated *if*, is here well rendered when, may appear not only because the Hebrew particle *כִּי* (to which this is thought to correspond) is observed so to signify, as Dr. Whitby has here noted; and not only is, *εἰ*, sometimes used for, *ὅταν*; but some copies even here read *ὅταν*, when. And accordingly, it seems proper so to render it in *John xiv.* 3. where we read it, *And if I go and prepare a place: But more naturally and properly, When I shall have gone, and shall have prepared the place, I will come again and receive you unto my self*, or *ἐλθὼν με*, I will take you along with my self, that where I am, there ye may be also. When the head of the church the only begotten of the Father, shall appear, his members, the adopted of God, shall appear and be manifested together with him. They may then well wait in faith, hope and earnest desire, for the revelation of the Lord Jesus; as even the creation itself waiteth for their perfection, and the publick manifestations of the sons of God, *Rom. viii.* 19. The sons of God will be known, and be made manifest by their likeness to their head; *they shall be like him*, like him in honour, and power, and glory. Their vile bodies shall be made like his glorious body; they shall be filled with life, light and bliss from him; *when he who is their life shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory*, *Col. iii.* 4. Then, 4. Their likeness to him is argued from the sight they shall have of him; *we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is*. Either their likeness will be the cause of that sight they shall have of him. Indeed, all shall see him,



but not as they do; not as he is, *viz.* to those in heaven. They shall see him in his frowns, in the terror of his majesty, and splendor of his avenging perfections: But these shall see him in the smiles and beauty of his face; in the correspondence and amiableness of his glory; in the harmony and agreeableness of his beatifick perfections. Their likeness shall enable them to see him, as the blessed do in heaven. Or the sight of him shall be the cause of their likeness; it shall be a transformative sight; they shall be transformed into the same image by the beatifick view, that they shall have of him. Then the apostle, 4. Urges the engagement of these sons of God to the prosecution of holiness; *and every man that hath this hope in him, purifies himself even as he is pure*, ver. 3. The sons of God know that their Lord is holy and pure; he is of purer heart and eyes than to admit any pollution or impurity to dwell with him. They than that hope to live with him, must study utmost purity from the world, and flesh, and sin; they must grow in grace and holiness. Not only does their Lord command them to do so, but their new nature inclines them so to do; yea, their hope of heaven will dictate and constrain them so to do. They know their high priest is holy, harmless, and undefiled. They know that their God and Father is the high and only one; that all the society is pure and holy; that their inheritance is an inheritance of saints in light. It is a contradiction to such hope to indulge sin and impurity. And therefore, as we are sanctified by faith, we must be sanctified by hope. That we may be saved by hope, we must be purified by hope. It is the hope of hypocrites and not as the sons of God, that makes an allowance for the gratification of impure desires and lusts.

4. Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. 5. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. 6. Whosoever abideth in him, sinneth not: whosoever sinneth, hath not seen him, neither known him. 7. Little children, let no man deceive you: He that doth righteousness, is righteous, even as he is righteous: 8. He that committeth sin, is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 9. Whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. 10. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: Whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

The apostle having alleged the believers obligation to purity, from his hope of heaven, and of communion with Christ in glory, at the day of his appearance, now proceeds to fill his own mouth and the believers mind with multiplied arguments against sin, and all communion with the impure, unfruitful works of darkness. And so he reasons and argues,

1. From the nature of sin, and the intrinsic evil of it. It is contrariety to the divine law. *Whosoever committeth sin, transgresseth also (or even) the law (or whosoever committeth sin, even committeth enormity, or aberration from law, or from the law).* For sin is the transgression of the law (or is lawlessness) ver. 4. Sin is the destitution or privation of correspondence and agreement with the divine law; that law that is the transcript of the divine nature and purity; that contains his will for the government of the world; that is suitable to the rational nature, and enacted for the good of the world; that shews man the way of felicity and peace, and conducts him to the author of his nature and of the law. The current commission of sin now, is the rejection of the divine law, and that is the rejection of the divine authority, and consequently of God himself.

2. From the design and errand of the Lord Jesus in and to this world, which was to remove sin; *and ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin*, ver. 5. The Son of God appeared, and was known in our nature; and he came to vindicate and exalt the divine law, and that by obedience to the precept, and by subjection, and suffering under the penal sanction; under the curse of it. *He came therefore to take away our sins*; to take away the guilt of them by the sacrifice of himself; to take away the commission of them by implanting a new nature in us: For we are sanctified by virtue of his death; and to dissuade and save from it by his own example. *And (or for) in him was no sin*, or he takes sin away, that he might conform us to himself; *and in him is no sin*. They that expect communion with Christ above, should study communion with him here in utmost purity. And the Christian world should know and consider the great end of the Son of God's coming hither; *it was to take away our sin*; and ye know (and this knowledge should be deep and effectual) *that he was manifested to take away our sins*.

3. From the opposition between sin, and a real union with, or adhesion unto the Lord Christ, *whosoever abideth in him sinneth not*, ver. 6. To sin here is the same as to commit sin, ver. 8, 9. and to commit sin is to practise sin. He that abideth in Christ continues not in the practise of sin. As vital union with the Lord Jesus broke the power of sin in the heart and nature; so continuance

therein prevents the regency and prevalence thereof in the life and conduct; or the negative expression here is put for the positive. *He sinneth not*, that is, he is obedient, *he keeps the commandments* (in sincerity, and in the ordinary course of life) *and does those things that are pleasing in his sight*, as is said, ver. 22. They that abide in Christ abide in their covenant with him, and consequently watch against the sin that is contrary thereto. They abide in the potent light and knowledge of him; and therefore it may be concluded, *that he that sinneth* (abideth in the predominant practice of sin) *hath not seen him* (hath not his mind impressed with a sound, evangelical discerning of him) *neither known him*, hath no experimental acquaintance with him. Practical renunciation of sin is the great evidence of spiritual union with, continuance in, and saving knowledge of the Lord Christ.

4. From the connexion between the practice of righteousness and a state of righteousness; intimating withal, that the practice of sin and a justified state are inconsistent; and this is introduced with a supposition, that a surmise to the contrary is a gross deceit. *Little children, dear children! And, as much children as ye are, herein, let no man deceive ye.* There will be those that will magnify your new light and entertainment of Christianity; that will make you believe that your knowledge, profession and baptism will excuse you the care and accuracy of the Christian life. But beware of such self-deceit. *He that does righteousness, is righteous.* It may appear, that righteousness may in several places of scripture be justly rendred religion, as *Mat. v. 10. Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness-sake*, i. e. religion sake. And *1 Pet. iii. 14. But if ye suffer for righteousness-sake* (i. e. religion-sake) *happy are ye*. And so *2 Tim. iii. 16. All scripture*, or the whole scripture, *is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine,—and for instruction in righteousness*, i. e. in the nature and branches of religion. To do righteousness then, especially, being set in opposition to the doing, committing or practising of sin, is to practise religion. Now he that practiseth religion is righteous; he is the righteous person on all accounts, he is sincere and upright before God. The practice of religion cannot subsist without a principle of integrity and conscience. He has that righteousness that consists in pardon of sin and right to life, founded upon the imputation of the Mediator's righteousness. He has a title to the crown of righteousness, which the righteous judge will give, according to his covenant and promise, *to those that love his appearing*, *2 Tim. iv. 8.* He has communion with Christ in conformity to the divine law, being, in some measure, practically righteous, as he; and has communion with him in the justified state, being now relatively righteous together with him.

5. From the relation between the sinner and the devil; and thereupon from the design and office of the Lord Christ towards the devil. 1. From the relation between the sinner and the devil. As elsewhere sinners and saints are famously distinguished; though even saints are sinners largely so called; *so to commit sin*, is here so to practise it, as sinners do that are distinguished from saints; to live under the power and dominion of it. And he that does so, *is of the devil*; his sinful nature is inspired by, agreeable and pleasing to, the devil; and he belongs to the party, and interest, and kingdom of the devil. It is he that is the author and patron of sin, and has been a practitioner of it, a tempter and instigator to it, even from the beginning of the world. And thereupon we must see how he argues. 2. From the design and office of the Lord Christ against the devil. *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil*, ver. 8. The devil has designed and endeavoured to ruin the work of God in this world. The Son of God hath undertaken the holy war against him. He came into our world, and was manifested in our flesh, that he might conquer him and dissolve his works. Sin will he loosen and dissolve more and more, till he has quite destroyed it. Let not us serve or indulge what the Son of God came to destroy.

6. From the connexion between regeneration and the relinquishment of sin, *whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin*. To be born of God, is to be inwardly renewed, and restored to an holy integrity or rectitude of nature; by the power of the Spirit of God. *Such a one committeth not sin*, does not work iniquity and practice disobedience, that is contrary to his new nature and the regenerate complexion of his Spirit. For, as the apostle adds, *his seed remaineth in him*; either the word of God, in its light and power, *remaineth in him*, as *1 Pet. i. 23. Being born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God, who liveth and abideth for ever.* Or, *that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*; the spiritual seminal principle of holiness remaineth in him. Renewing grace is an abiding principle. Religion, in the spring of it, is not an art, an acquired dexterity and skill, but a new nature. And thereupon the consequence is, the regenerate person *cannot sin*; that he cannot commit an act of sin, I suppose no judicious interpreter understands. That would be contrary to *chap. i. 9.* where it is made our duty to confess our sins, and supposed our privilege thereupon to have our sins forgiven. *He therefore cannot sin*, in the sense the apostle says, *he cannot commit sin*. He cannot continue in the course and practice of sin. He cannot so sin, as to denominate him a sinner, in opposition to a saint or servant of God. Again, he cannot sin comparatively, as he did before he was born of God, and as others do that are not so. And the reason is, *because he is born of God*. Which will amount to all this inhibition and impediment. 1. There is that



that light in his mind that shews him the evil and malignity of sin. 2. There is that bias upon his heart, that disposes him to loath and hate sin. 3. There is the spiritual, feminal principle or disposition, that breaks the force and fulness of the sinful acts. They proceed not from that plenary power of corruption as they do in others, nor obtain that plenitude of heart, spirit and consent, as they do in others. *The spirit lusteth against the flesh.* And therefore in respect to such sin it may be said, *it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.* It is not reckoned the person's sin in the gospel account, where the bent and frame of the mind and spirit is against it. Then, 4. There is a disposition for humiliation and repentance for sin, when it has been committed. *He that is born of God, cannot sin.* Here we may call to mind the usual distinction of natural and moral impotency. The unregenerate person is morally unable for what is religiously good. The regenerate person is (happily) disabled for sin. There is a restraint, an embargo (as we may say) laid upon his sinning powers. It goes against him sedately and deliberately to sin. We usually say of a person of known integrity, he cannot lye, he cannot cheat and commit other enormities. *How can I commit this great wickedness, and sin against God?* Gen. xxxix. 9. And so, they that persist in sinful life, sufficiently demonstrate that they are not born of God.

From the discrimination between the children of God and the children of the devil. They have their distinct characters. *In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil,* ver. 10. In the world (according to the old distinction) there is the seed of God, and the seed of the serpent. Now the seed of the serpent is known by these two signatures. 1. By neglect of religion; *whosoever doth not righteousness* (omits and disregards the rights and dues of God; for religion is but our righteousness towards God, or giving him his due; and whosoever does not conscientiously do this) *is not of God*; but, on the contrary, of the devil. The devil is the father of unrighteous or irreligious souls. And, 2. By hatred of fellow-Christians. *Neither he that loveth not his brother,* ver. 10. True Christians are to be loved for God's and Christ's sake. They that so love them not (but despise, and hate, and persecute them) have the serpentine nature still abiding in them.

11. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. 12. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother: And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brothers righteous. 13. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.

The apostle having intimated that one note of the devil's children is hatred of the brethren, takes occasion thence, 1. To recommend fraternal Christian love, and that from the excellence, or antiquity, or primariness of the injunction relating thereto. *And this is the message* (the errand or charge) *which ye heard from the beginning* (this came among the principal parts of practical Christianity) *that we should love one another,* ver. 11. We should love the Lord Jesus and value his love, and consequently love all the objects of it, and, thereupon, all our brethren in Christ.

2. To dissuade from what is contrary thereto, all ill will towards the brethren, and that by the example of Cain. His envy and malignity should deter us from harbouring the like passion, and that upon these accounts. 1. It shewed that he was as the first-born of the serpent's seed, even he, the eldest son of the first man was of the wicked one. He imitated and resembled the first wicked one, the devil. 2. His ill will had no restraint; it proceeded so far as to contrive and accomplish murder, and that of a near relation, and that in the beginning of the world, when there were but few to replenish it. *He slew his brother,* ver. 12. Sin indulged knows no bound. And, 3. It proceeded so far, and had so much of the devil, that he murdered his brother for religion's sake. He stomached the meliority of Abel's service, and envied him the favour and acceptance he had with God. And for these he martyred his brother. *And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous,* ver. 12. Ill-will will teach us to hate and revenge what we should admire and imitate. And then,

3. To infer, that it is no wonder then that good men are so served now. *Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you,* ver. 13. The serpentine nature still continues in the world. The great serpent himself reigns as the God of this world. Wonder not then that the serpentine world hates and hisses at you that belong to that seed of the woman that is to bruise the serpent's head.

14. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death. 15. Whosoever hateth his brother, is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. 16. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. 17. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? 18. My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but

in deed and in truth. 19. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

The beloved apostle can scarce touch upon the mention of sacred love, but he must enlarge upon the enforcement of it; as here he does by divers arguments and incentives thereto; as,

1. That it is a note of our evangelical justification, of our transition into a state of life. *We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren,* ver. 14. We are by nature children of wrath, and heirs of death. By the gospel (the gospel-covenant or promise) our state, towards another world, is altered and changed. We pass from death to life; from the guilt of death to the right of life. And this transition is made upon our believing in the Lord Jesus. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,* and he that believeth not, *hath the wrath of God abiding on him,* John iii. 36. Now this happy change of state we may come to be assured of; *we know that we are passed from death to life*; and we may know it by the evidences of our faith in Christ, of which this love to our brethren is one, which leads us to characterize this love, that is such a mark of our justified state. It is not a zeal for a party in the common religion, nor an affection for, or an affectation of, those that are of the same denomination, and subordinate sentiments with our selves. But this love, 1. Supposes a general love to mankind; the law of Christian love, in the Christian community, is founded on the catholic law, in the society of mankind, *thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* Mankind is to be loved, principally, on these two accounts. 1. As the excellent work of God, and, 2. As being beloved in Christ. 1. As the excellent work of God, made by him, and made in wonderful resemblance of him. The reason that God assigns for the certain punishment of a murderer, is a reason against our hatred of any of the brethren of mankind; and consequently a reason for our love to them; *for in the image of God made he man,* Gen. ix. 6. 2. As being, in some measure, beloved in Christ. The whole race of mankind, the *gens humana*, should be considered, as being, in distinction from fallen angels, a redeemed nation, as having a divine redeemer designed, prepared and given for them. *So God loved the world,* even this world, *that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* John iii. 16. A world so beloved of God should accordingly be loved by us. And this love will exert it self in earnest desires, and prayers, and attempts for the conversion and salvation of the yet uncalled blinded world; *my heart's desire and prayer for Israel is, that they may be saved.* And then this love will include all due love to enemies themselves. Then this Christian love, 2. Includes a peculiar love to the Christian society, to the catholic church, and that for the sake of her head, as being his body, as being redeemed, justified and sanctified in and by him; and this love particularly acts and operates towards those of the catholic church, that we have opportunity of being personally acquainted with, or credibly informed of. And so they are not so much loved for their own sakes, as for the sake of God and Christ, that have loved them. And it is God and Christ, or if you will, the love of God and grace of Christ, that is beloved and valued in them, and towards them. And so this is the issue of faith in Christ; and is thereupon a note of our passage from death to life.

2. The hatred of our brethren is on the contrary a sign of our deadly state, of our continuance under the legal sentence of death; *he that loveth not his brother* (his brother in Christ) *abideth in death,* ver. 14. He yet stands under the curse and condemnation of the law. This the apostle argues by a clear syllogism. Ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him; but he that hates his brother is a murderer; and therefore ye cannot but know, that he that hates his brother hath not eternal life abiding in him, ver. 15. *or he abideth in death,* as it is expressed, ver. 14. *Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.* For hatred of the person is, so far as it prevails, an hatred of life and welfare, and naturally tends to desire the extinction of it. Cain hated, and then slew his brother. And then hatred will shut up the bowels of compassion from the poor brethren, and will thereby expose them to the sorrows of death. And it has appeared that hatred of the brethren has in all ages dressed them up in ill names, odious characters and calumnies, and exposed them to persecution and the sword. No wonder then, that he that pretty well knows the heart of man, or is taught by him that fully knows it, that knows the natural tendency and issue of vile and violent passions, and knows withal the fulness of the divine law, declares him that hates his brother to be a murderer. Now he that by the frame and disposition of his heart is a murderer, *cannot have eternal life abiding in him.* For he that is such, must needs be carnally minded; *and to be carnally minded is death,* Rom. viii. 6. The apostle by the expression of having eternal life abiding in us, may seem to mean the possession of an internal principle of endless life. According to that of the Saviour, *whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst*; shall never be totally destitute thereof, *but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life,* John. iv. 14. And thereupon some may be apt to surmise, that the passing from death to life, ver. 14. does not signify the relative change made in our justification of life, but the real change made in the regeneration to life. And accordingly,



that the abiding in death, mentioned, *ver. 14.* is continuance in spiritual death, as it is usually called, or abiding in the corrupt deadly temper of nature. But as these passages more naturally denote the state of the person, whether adjudged to life or death; so the relative transition from death to life may well be proved or disproved by the possession or non-possession of the inward principle of eternal life. Since washing from the guilt of sin, and from the filth and power of sin, are inseparably united. *But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, 1 Cor. vi. 11.*

3. The example of God and Christ should inflame our hearts with this holy love; *hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren, ver. 16.* The great God hath given his Son to the death for us. But since this apostle hath declared that the word was God, and that he became flesh for us; I see not why we may not interpret this of God the Word. Here is the love of God himself, of him who in his own person is God, though not the Father, that he assumed a life, that he might lay it down for us! Here is the condescension, the miracle, the mystery of divine love, that God would redeem the church with his own blood! And surely we should love those whom God hath loved and so loved! And shall certainly do so, if we have any love for God.

The apostle having proposed this flaming, constraining example of, and motive to love, proceeds to shew us what should be the temper and effect of this our Christian love. And so, 1. It must be, in the highest degree, so fervent, as to make us willing to suffer even to the death for the good of the church, for the safety and salvation of the dear brethren. *And we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren, ver. 16.* either in our ministrations and service to them; *yea, and if I be offered upon the service and sacrifice of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all: (I shall congratulate your felicity) Phil. ii. 17.* Or in exposing our selves to hazards (when called thereto) for the safety and preservation of those that are more serviceable to the glory of God and the edification of the church, than we can be: *Who have for my life laid down their own necks; unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles, Rom. xvi. 4.* How mortified should the Christian be to this life? How prepared to part with it? And how well assured of a better?

2. It must be in the next degree, compassionate, liberal and communicative to the necessities of the brethren. *For who hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up the bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? ver. 17.* It pleases God, that some of the Christian brethren should be poor, for the exercise of the charity and love of those that are rich. And it pleases the same God to give to some of the Christian brethren this world's good, that they may exercise their grace, in communicating to the poor saints. And they that have this world's good, must love a good God more, and their good brethren more, and be ready to distribute it for their sakes. It appears here that this love to the brethren is founded upon love to God; in that it is here called so by the apostle. *How dwelleth the love of God in him? This love to the brethren is love to God in them; and where there is none of this love to them, there is no true love to God at all.* I was going to intimate the third and lowest degree in the next verse, but the apostle has prevented me, by intimating that this last charitable, communicative love in persons of ability, is the lowest that can consist with the love of God. But there may be other fruits of this love; and therefore the apostle desires that in all it should be unfeigned and operative, as circumstances will allow. *My little children (my dear children in Christ) let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth, ver. 18.* Compliments and flatteries become not Christians; but the sincere expressions of sacred affection, and the services or labours of love do. Then,

4. This love will evince our sincerity in religion, and give us hope towards God; *and hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him, ver. 19.* It is a great happiness to be assured of our integrity in religion. They that are so assured, may have holy boldness or confidence towards God; they may appeal to him from the censures and condemnation of the world. The way to arrive at the knowledge of our own truth and uprightness in Christianity, and to secure our inward peace, is to abound in love, and in the works of love towards the Christian brethren.

20. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. 21. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God. 22. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.

The apostle having intimated that there may be, even among us, such a privilege as an assurance or sound persuasion of heart towards God, proceeds here,

1. To establish the court of conscience, and to assert the authority of it: *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things, ver. 20.* Our heart here is our self-reflecting, judicial power, that noble, excellent ability, whereby we can take cognizance of ourselves, of our spirits, or dispositions, and actions; and accordingly pass a judgment upon our state to-

wards God; and so it is the same with conscience, or the power of moral self-consciousness; this power can act both as witness, judge, and executioner of judgment; it either accuses or excuses, condemns or justifies; it is set and placed in this office by God himself; *the spirit of a man, thus capacitated and empowered, is the candle of the Lord, a luminary lighted and set up by the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly, taking into scrutiny, and viewing the penetralia, the private recesses, and secret transactions of the inner man, Prov. xx. 27.* Conscience is God's vicegerent, calls the court in his name, and acts for him; *the answer of a good conscience towards God, 1 Pet. iii. 21.* God is chief judge of the court; *if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, i. e. superior to our heart and conscience in power and judgment; hence the act and judgment of the court is the act and judgment of God; as, 1. If conscience condemns us, God does so too: For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things, ver. 20. God is a greater witness than our conscience, and knoweth more against us than it does; he knoweth all things: He is a greater judge than conscience; for as he is supreme, so his judgment shall stand, and shall be fully and finally executed: And this seems to be the design of another apostle, when he says, For I know nothing by myself, i. e. in the case wherein I am censured by some; I am not conscious of any guile, or allowed unfaithfulness, in my stewardship and ministry, yet am I not hereby justified; it is not by my own conscience that I must ultimately stand or fall; the justification, or justifying sentence, of my conscience, or self-consciousness, will not determine the controversy between you and me; as you do not appeal to its sentence, so neither will you be concluded by its decision; but he that judgeth me, supremely and finally judgeth me, and by whose judgment you and I must be determined, is the Lord, 1 Cor. iv. 4.* Or, 2. If conscience acquit us, God does so too: *Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God, ver. 21. then have we assurance that he accepts us now, and will acquit us in the great day of account: But possibly may some presumptuous soul here say, I am glad of this; my heart does not condemn me, and therefore I may conclude God does not: As, on the contrary, upon the foregoing verse, some pious, trembling soul will be ready to cry out, God forbid! my heart or conscience condemns me, and must I then infallibly expect the condemnation of God? But let such know, that the errors of the witness are not here reckoned as the acts of the court; ignorance, error, prejudice, partiality, and presumption, may be said to be faults of the officers of the court, or of the attendants of the judge, as the mind, the will, appetite, passion, sensual disposition, or disordered brain; or of the jury, that gives a false verdict, not of the judge itself; conscience, *συνείδησις*, is properly self-consciousness; acts of ignorance and error are not acts of self-consciousness, but of some mistaken power; and the court of conscience is here described in its process, according to the original constitution of it by God himself; according to which process, what is bound in conscience is bound in heaven; let conscience therefore be heard, be well informed, and diligently attended unto.*

2. To indicate the privilege of those that have a good conscience towards God; they have interest in heaven, and in the court above; their suits are heard there: *And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, ver. 22.* It is supposed that the petitioners do not desire, or do not intend to desire, any thing that is contrary to the honour and glory of the court, or to their own intended spiritual good; and then they may depend upon receiving the good things they ask for; and this supposition may well be made concerning the petitioners, or they may well be supposed to receive the good things they ask for, considering their qualification and practice; *because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight, ver. 22.* Obedient souls are prepared for blessings, and they have promise of audience; they that commit things displeasing to God, cannot expect that he should please them in hearing and answering their prayers, *Psal. lxxvi. 18. Prov. xxviii. 9.*

23. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. 24. And he that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.

The apostle having mentioned *keeping the commandments*, and *pleasing of God*, as the qualification of effectual petitioners in and with heaven, here suitably proceeds, 1. To represent unto us what those *commandments* primarily and summarily are; they are comprehended in this double one; *And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment, ver. 23.* To believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, is, 1. To discern what he is according to his name; to have an intellectual view of his person and office, as *the Son of God*, and the anointed Saviour of the world; *that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, John vi. 40.* 2. To approve him in judgment and conscience, i. e. in conviction and consciousness of our case, as one wisely and wonderfully prepared and adapted for the whole work of the eternal salvation. 3. To consent to, and acquiesce in him, as our redeemer



deemer and recoverer unto God. 4. To trust to, and rely upon him, for the full and final discharge of his saving office: *They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee*, Psalm ix. 10. *I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day*, 2 Tim. i. 12. This faith is a needful requisite to those that would be prevalent petitioners with God; because it is by *the Son* that we must come to *the Father*; through his grace and righteousness our persons must be accepted or ingratiated with *the Father*, Eph. i. 6. through his purchase all our desired blessings must come; and through his intercession our prayers must be heard and answered: This is the first part of the *commandment* that must be observed by acceptable worshippers; the second is, that we *love one another, as he gave us commandment*, ver. 23. The command of Christ should be continually before our eyes; Christian love must possess our souls when we go to God in prayer: To this end we must remember, that our Lord obliges us, 1. To forgive those that offend us, *Matt. vi. 14.* and, 2. To reconcile ourselves to those that we have offended, *Matt. v. 23, 24.* As good-will to men was proclaimed from heaven, so good-will to men, and particularly to the brethren, must be carried in the hearts of those that go to God and heaven.

2. To represent to us the blessedness of obedience to these commands; the obedient enjoy communion with God; *and he that keepeth his commandments, and particularly these of faith and love, dwelleth in him, and he in him*, ver. 24. We dwell in God by a happy relation to him, and spiritual union with him, through his Son, and by an holy converse with him; and God dwells in us by his word, and our faith fixed on him, and by the operations of his Spirit; and then there occurs the trial of this divine inhabitation; *and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us*, ver. 24. by that sacred disposition and frame of soul that he hath conferred upon us; which being a spirit of faith in God and Christ, and of love to God and man, appears to be of God.

#### C H A P. IV.

*In this chapter the apostle exhorts to try spirits, ver. 1. Gives a note to try by, ver. 2, 3. Shews who are of the world, and who of God, ver. 4,—6. Urges Christian love by divers considerations, ver. 7,—16. Describes our love to God, and the effect of it, ver. 17,—21.*

1. **B**eloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. 2. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God. 3. And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof you have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world.

The apostle having said that God's dwelling in and with us may be known by *the Spirit that he hath given us*, intimates, that that Spirit may be discerned and distinguished from other spirits that appear in the world; and so here, 1. He calls the disciples, to whom he writes, to caution and scrutiny about the spirits, and spiritual professors, that were now risen. 1. To caution: *Beloved, believe not every spirit*; regard not, trust not, follow not every pretender to *the Spirit of God*, or every professor of vision, or inspiration, or revelation from God; truth is the foundation of simulation and counterfeits; there had been real communications from the divine Spirit, and therefore others pretended thereto; God will take the way of his own wisdom and goodness, though it may be liable to abuse; he has sent inspired teachers to the world, and given us a supernatural revelation, though others may be so evil, and so impudent, as to pretend the same; every pretender to the divine Spirit, or to inspiration, and extraordinary illumination thereby, is not to be believed; time was when *the spiritual man* (the man of the Spirit, that made a great noise about, and boast of the Spirit) *was mad*, Hof. ix. 7. 2. To scrutiny: To examination of the claims that are laid to the Spirit: *But try the spirits whether they are of God*, ver. 1. God has given of his Spirit in these latter ages of the world, but not to all that profess to come furnished therewith; to the disciples is allowed a judgment of discretion, in reference to the spirits that would be believed and trusted in the affairs of religion; a reason is given for this trial, *because many false prophets are gone out into the world*, ver. 1. there being much about the time of our Saviour's appearance in the world a general expectation among the Jews of a Redeemer to Israel, and the humiliation, spiritual reformation, and sufferings of the Saviour being taken as a prejudice against him, others were induced to set up as prophets and messiahs to Israel, according to the Saviour's prediction, *Matt. xxiv. 23, 24.* It should not seem strange to us that false teachers set themselves up in the church, it was so in the apostles times; fatal is the spirit of delusion, sad that men should vaunt themselves for prophets, and inspired preachers, that are by no means so!

2. He gives a test whereby the disciples may try these pretending spirits; these spirits set up for prophets, doctors, or dictators in re-

ligion, and so they are to be tried by their doctrine; and the test whereby, in that day, or in that part of the world where the apostle now resided (for in various seasons, and in various churches, tests were different) must be this; *hereby know ye the Spirit of God, every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God*, ver. 2. Or, *that confesseth Jesus Christ, that came in the flesh*. Jesus Christ is to be contended as the Son of God, the eternal Life and Word, that was with the Father from the beginning, as the Son of God that came into, and came in our human, mortal nature, and therein suffered and died at Jerusalem: He that confesseth and preacheth this, by a mind supernaturally instructed and enlightened therein, does it by *the Spirit of God*, or God is the author of that illumination: And, on the contrary, *every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh* (or, *that Jesus Christ that came in the flesh*) *is not of God*, ver. 3. God has given so much testimony to Jesus Christ, that was lately here in the world, and in *the flesh* (or in a fleshly body like ours) though now in heaven, that ye may be assured that any impulse or pretended inspiration that contradicts this, is far from being from heaven, and of God: The sum of revealed religion is comprehended in the doctrine concerning Christ, his person, and office: We see then the aggravation of a formed opposition against him and it: *And this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come, and even now already is it in the world*, ver. 3. It was foreknown by God that antichrists would arise, and antichristian spirits oppose his Spirit and his truth; it was foreknown also that one eminent antichrist would arise, and make a long and fatal war against the Christ of God, and his institution, and honour, and kingdom in the world; this great antichrist would have his way prepared, and his rise facilitated, by other lesser antichrists, and the spirit of error working, and disposing mens minds for him; the antichristian spirit began betimes, even in the apostles days: Dreadful and unsearchable is the judgment of God, that persons should be given over to an antichristian spirit, and to such darkness and delusion, as to set themselves against the Son of God, and all the testimony that the Father hath given to the Son! but we have been foretold and forewarned that such opposition would arise; we should therefore cease to be offended; and the more we see the word of Christ fulfilled, the more confirmed we should be in the truth of it.

4. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. 5. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. 6. We are of God: he that knoweth God, heareth us; he that is not of God, heareth not us. Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.

In these verses the apostle encourages the disciples against the fear and danger of this seducing antichristian spirit, and that by such methods as these: 1. He assures them of a more divine principle in them: *Ye are of God, little children*, ver. 4. *Ye are God's little children: We are of God*, ver. 6. *We are born of God*, taught of God, anointed of God, and so secured against infectious, fatal delusions: God has his chosen, that shall not be mortally seduced. 2. He gives them hope of victory: *And have overcome them*, ver. 4. Ye have hitherto overcome these deceivers, and their temptations, and there is good ground of hope that ye will do so still, and that upon these two accounts: 1. There is a strong preserver within you; *because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*, ver. 4. The Spirit of God dwells in you, and that Spirit is more mighty than men or devils; it is a great happiness to be under the influence of the holy Ghost. 2. Ye are not of the same temper with these deceivers; the Spirit of God hath framed your mind for God and heaven; *but they are of the world*; the spirit that prevails in them, leads them to this world, their heart is addicted thereto; they study the pomp, the pleasure, and interest of the world; *and therefore speak they of the world*: They profess a worldly messiah and saviour, they project a worldly kingdom and dominion: The possessions and treasures of the world would they engross to themselves, forgetting that the true Redeemer's *kingdom is not of this world*: And this worldly design procures them profelytes: *And the world heareth them*, ver. 5. They are followed by such as themselves; *the world will love its own, and its own will love it*: But they are in a fair way to conquer pernicious seductions, that have conquered the love of this seducing world. Then, 3. He represents to them, that though their company might be the smaller, yet it was the better: They had more divine and holy knowledge: *He that knoweth God, heareth us*: He that knows the purity and holiness of God, the love and grace of God, the truth and faithfulness of God, the ancient word and prophecies of God, the signals and testimonials of God, must know that he is with us; and he that knows this, will attend to us, and abide with us: He that is well furnished with natural religion, will the more faithfully cleave to the Christian: *He that knoweth God* (in his natural and moral excellencies, revelations and works) *heareth us*, ver. 6. As, on the contrary, *he that is not of God, heareth not us*: He that knows not God, regards not us: He that is not *born of God* (walking according to his natural disposition) walks not with us: The further any are from God (as appears in all ages) the further they are from Christ, and his faithful servants:



servants : And the more addicted persons are to this world, the more remote they are from the spirit of Christianity : And thus you have a distinction betwixt us and others : *Hereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error*, ver. 6. This doctrine concerning our Saviour's person leading you from the world to God, is a signature of *the Spirit of truth*, in opposition to *the spirit of error* : The more pure and holy any doctrine is, the more likely to be of God.

7. Beloved, let us love one another : for love is of God ; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. 8. He that loveth not, knoweth not God : for God is love. 9. In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 10. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 11. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. 12. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. 13. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

As *the Spirit of truth* is known by doctrine (so spirits are to be tried) it is known by love likewise ; and so here follows a strong, fervent exhortation to holy Christian love : *Beloved, let us love one another*, ver. 7. The apostle would unite them together in his love, that he may unite them in love to each other : *Beloved, I beseech you, by the love I bear to you, that you put on unfeigned mutual love* : This exhortation is pressed and urged with variety of argument : As, 1. From the high and heavenly descent of love : *For love is of God* : He is the Fountain, Author, Parent, and Commander of love : It is the sum of his law and gospel : *And every one that loveth* (whose spirit is framed to judicious holy love) *is born of God*, ver. 7. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of love : The new nature in the children of God is the offspring of his love : And the temper and complexion of it is love : *The fruit of the Spirit is love*, Gal. v. 22. Love comes down from heaven.

2. Love argues a true and just apprehension of the divine nature : *He that loveth, knoweth God*, ver. 7. *He that loveth not, knoweth not God*, ver. 8. What attribute of the Divine Majesty so clearly shines in all the world as his communicative goodness, which is love ? The wisdom, the greatness, the harmony, and usefulness of the vast creation, that so fully demonstrate his being, do at the same time shew and prove his love ; and natural reason inferring and collecting the nature and excellence of the most absolute perfect being, must collect and find that he is most highly good ; and *he that loveth not* (is not quickened by the knowledge he hath of God to the affection and practice of love) *knoweth not God* ; it is a convictive evidence that the sound and due knowledge of God dwells not in such a soul ; his love must needs shine among his primary, brightest perfections ; *for God is love*, ver. 8. his nature and essence is love ; his will and works are (primarily) love : Not that this is the only conception we are to have of him ; we have found that he is light as well as love, chap. i. 5. and God is principally love to himself, and he has such perfections as arise from the necessary love he must bear to his necessary existence, excellence, and glory ; but love is natural and essential to the Divine Majesty ; *God is love* ; that *God is love*, is argued from the display and demonstration that he hath given of it ; as,

1. That he hath loved us, such as we are. *In this was manifested the love of God towards us*, ver. 9. towards us, mortals ; us, ungrateful rebels. *God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us*, Rom. v. 8. Strange, that God should love impure, vain, vile dust and ashes ! 2. That he hath loved us at such a rate ; at such an incomparable value as he has given for us ; he has given his own, only beloved, blessed Son for us. *Because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him*, ver. 9. This person is in some peculiar, distinguishing way the Son of God ; he is the only begotten : Should we suppose him begotten as a creature, or created being, he is not the only begotten : Should we suppose him a natural, necessary emanation from the Father's glory, or glorious essence (or substance) he must be the only begotten : And then it will be a mystery and miracle of divine love, that such a Son should be sent into our world for us ! It may well be said, *so* (so wonderfully, so amazingly, so incredibly) *God loved the world*. 3. That God loved us first, and in the circumstances in which we lay. *Herein is love*, (unusual, unprecedented love) *not that we loved God, but that he loved us*, ver. 10. *He loved us*, when we had no love for him ; when we lay in our guilt, misery, and blood ; when we were undeserving, ill-deserving, polluted, and unclean, and wanted to be washed from our sins in sacred blood. 4. That he gave us his Son for such service, and such an end ; for such service, *to be the propitiation for our sins* ; consequently to die for us, to die under the law and curse of God, to bear our sins in his own body, to be crucified, to be wounded in his soul, and pierced in his side, to be dead and buried for us, ver. 10. and then for such an end, for such a good and beneficial end to us, *that we might live through him*, ver. 9. *might live for ever through him, might live in heaven, live with God, and*

*live in eternal glory and blessedness with him, and through him* : O what love is here ! Then,

3. Divine love to the brethren should constrain ours : *Beloved, (I would adjure you, by your interest in my love, to remember) if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*, ver. 11. This should be an invincible argument : The example of God should press us : *We should be followers* (or imitators) *of him, as his dear children* : The objects of the divine love, should be the objects of ours : Shall we refuse to love those whom the eternal God hath loved ? We should be admirers of his love, and lovers of his love (of that benevolence and complacency that is in him) and, consequently, lovers of those whom he loves : The general love of God to the world, should induce an universal love among mankind ; *that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven ; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth his rain on the just and on the unjust*, Matt. v. 45. The peculiar love of God to the church, and to the saints, should be productive of a peculiar love there : *If God so loved us, we ought surely* (in some measure suitably thereto) *to love one another*.

4. The Christian love is an assurance of the divine inhabitation. *If we love one another, God dwelleth in us*, ver. 12. Now *God dwelleth in us*, not by any visible presence, or immediate appearance to the eye ; *no man hath seen God at any time*, ver. 12. but by *his Spirit*, ver. 13. or, *no man hath seen God at any time* ; he does not here present himself to our eye, or to our immediate intuition, and so he does not that way demand and exact our love ; but he demands and expects it in that way in which he has thought meet to deserve and claim it ; and that is in the illustration that he has given of himself and of his love (and thereupon of his loveliness too) in the catholic church, and particularly in the brethren, the members of that church ; in them, and in his appearance for them, and with them, is God to be loved ; and thus, *if we love one another, God dwelleth in us* ; the sacred lovers of the brethren are the temples of God ; the Divine Majesty has a peculiar residence there.

5. Therein the divine love attains a considerable end and accomplishment in us. *And his love is perfected in us*, ver. 12. It hath obtained its completion in and upon us : *God's love is not perfected in him, but in and with us* : *His love* could not be deluged to be ineffectual and fruitless upon us ; when its proper, genuine end and issue is attained, and produced thereby, it may be said to be *perfected* ; so faith is *perfected* by its works, and *love perfected* by its operations : When the divine love hath wrought us to the same image, to the love of God, and thereupon to the love of the brethren, the children of God, for his sake, it is therein and so far *perfected* and compleated, though this love of ours is not at present perfect, nor the ultimate end of the divine love to us : How ambitious should we be of this fraternal Christian love, when God reckons his own love to us *perfected* thereby ? To this the apostle, having mentioned the high favour of God's dwelling in us, subjoins the note and character thereof ; *hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit*, ver. 13. Certainly this mutual inhabitation is something more noble and great than we are well acquainted with, or can declare : One would think, that for *God to dwell in us, and we in him*, were words too high for mortals to use, had not God gone before us therein : What it is, hath been briefly said on chap. iii. 24. what it fully is, must be left to the revelation of the blessed world : But this mutual inhabitation *we know*, says the apostle, *because he hath given us of his Spirit* ; he hath lodged the image and fruit of *his Spirit* in our hearts, ver. 13. and *the Spirit that he hath given us* appears to be his, or of him, since it is *the Spirit of power* (of zeal and magnanimity for God) *of love* (to God and man) *and of a sound mind*, of an understanding well instructed in the affairs of God and religion, and his kingdom among men, 2 Tim. i. 7.

14. And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. 15. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. 16. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love ; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Since faith in Christ works love to God, and love to God must kindle love to the brethren, the apostle here confirms the prime article of the Christian faith, as the foundation of such love ; where, 1. He proclaims the fundamental article of the Christian religion, which is so representative of the love of God : *And we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world*, ver. 14. We here see, 1. The Lord Jesus's relation to God, he is *Son to the Father*, such a Son as no one else is, and so as to be God with the Father. 2. His relation and office towards us, *the Saviour of the world*, he saves us by his death and example, and intercession, and Spirit, and power against the enemies of our salvation. 3. The ground on which he became so, by the mission of him, *the Father sent the Son*, he decreed and willed his coming hither, in and with the consent of the Son. 4. The apostle's assurance of this, he and his brethren had seen it, they had seen the Son of God in his human nature, in his holy converse and works, in his transfiguration on the mount, in his death, and resurrection from the dead,



dead, and royal ascent to heaven ; they had so *seen* him as to be satisfied that he was *the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*. 5. The apostle's attestation of this, in pursuance of such evidence ; *we have seen and do testify* ; the weight of this truth obliges us to testify it, the salvation of the world lies upon it, the evidence of the truth warrants us to testify it, our eyes, and ears, and hands have been witnesses of it ; thereupon,

2. The apostle states the excellency, or the excellent privilege attending the due acknowledgment of this truth : *Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God*, ver. 15. This confession seems to include faith in the heart, as the foundation of it ; acknowledgment with the mouth, to the glory of God and Christ ; and profession in the life and conduct, in opposition to the flatteries or frowns of the world : Thus *no man says that Jesus is the Lord, but by the holy Ghost* (by the external attestation, and internal operation of the holy Ghost) 1 Cor. xii. 3. And so he that thus confesses Christ (and God in him) is enriched with, or possessed by the Spirit of God, and has a complacental knowledge of God, and much holy enjoyment of him : Then,

3. The apostle applies this in order to the excitation of holy love ; God's love is thus seen and exerted in Christ Jesus ; and (thus) *have we known and believed the love that God hath to us*, ver. 16. The Christian revelation is, what should endear it to us, the revelation of the divine love ; the articles of our revealed faith are but so many articles relating to the divine love ; the history of the Lord Christ is the history of God's love to us ; all his transactions in and with his Son were but testifications of his love to us, and means to advance us to the love of God ; *God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself*, 2 Cor. v. 19. and hence we may learn, 1. That *God is love*, ver. 16. he is essential, boundless love ; he has incomparable, incomprehensible love for us of this world, which he has demonstrated in the mission, and whole mediation of his beloved Son : It is the great objection and prejudice against the Christian revelation, that the love of God should be so strange and unaccountable as to give his own eternal Son for us ; it is the prejudice of many against the eternity and the deity of the Son, that so great a person should be given for us : It is, I confess, mysterious and unfathomable ; but there are *unsearchable riches in Christ* ; it is pity the vastness of the divine love should be made a prejudice against the revelation and the belief of it : But what will not God do, when he designs to demonstrate the height of any perfection of his ? When he would shew somewhat of his power and wisdom, he makes such a world as this ; when he would shew more of his grandeur and glory, he makes heaven for the ministering spirits that are before the throne ; what will he not do then when he designs to demonstrate his love, and to demonstrate his highest love, or that he himself *is love* (or that love is one of the most bright, dear, transcendent, operative excellencies of his unbounded nature) and to demonstrate this not only to us, but to the angelical world, and to the principalities and powers above, and this not for our surprize for a while, but for the admiration, and praise, and adoration of our most exalted powers to all eternity ? What will not God then do ? Surely then it will look more agreeable to the design, and grandeur, and pregnancy of his love, if I may so call it, to give an eternal Son for us, than to make a Son on purpose for our relief : In such a dispensation, as that of giving a natural, eternal Son for us, and to us, he will commend his love to us indeed ; and what will not the God of love do when he designs to commend his love ? and to commend it in the view of heaven, and earth, and hell ? and when he will commend himself, and recommend himself to us, and to our highest conviction, and also affection, as love itself ? And what if it should appear at last, which I shall only offer to the consideration of the judicious, that the divine love, and particularly God's love in Christ, should be the foundation of the glories of heaven, in the present enjoyment of those ministering spirits that comported with it, and of the salvation of this world, and of the torments of hell ? this last will seem most strange : But what if therein it should appear, not only that *God is love* to himself, in vindicating his own law, and government, and love, and glory ; but that the damned ones are made so, or are so punished, 1. Because they despised the love of God already manifested and exhibited : 2. Because they refused to be beloved in what was further proposed and promised : And, 3. Because they made themselves unmeet to be the objects of divine complacency and delight ? If the consciences of the damned should accuse them of these things, and, especially, of rejecting the highest instance of divine love ; if the far greatest part of the intelligent creation should be everlastingly blessed, through the highest instance of the divine love, then may it well be inscribed upon the whole creation of God, *God is love*.

2. That, hereupon, *he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him*, ver. 16. there is great communion between the God of love and the loving soul, *i. e.* he that loves the creation of God, according to its different relation to God, and reception from him, and interest in him ; *he that dwells in sacred love, has the love of God shed abroad upon his heart*, has the impress of God upon his spirit, the Spirit of God sanctifying and sealing him, lives in the meditation, views and tastes of the divine love, and will, ere long, go to dwell with God for ever.

17. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment : because as he is, so are we in this world. 18. There is no fear in love ; but perfect love casteth out fear : because fear hath torment : he that feareth, is not made perfect in love. 19. We love him ; because he first loved us. 20. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a lyer : for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ? 21. And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also.

The apostle having thus excited and enforced sacred love from the great pattern and motive of it, the love that is, and dwells in God himself, proceeds to recommend it further by other considerations, and he recommends it in both the branches of it, both as love to God, and love to our brother, or Christian neighbour.

(1.) As love to God, to the *primum amabile*, the first and chief of all amiable beings and objects, he that hath the confluence of all beauty, excellence, and loveliness in himself, and confers on all other beings whatever renders them good and amiable ; love to God seems here to be recommended on these accounts :

1. It will give us peace and satisfaction of spirit in the day when it will be most needed, or when it will be the greatest pleasure and blessing imaginable : *Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment*, ver. 17. There must be a day of universal judgment. happy they that shall have holy, fiducial boldness before the Judge at that day ; that shall be able to lift up their heads, and to look him in the face, as knowing he is their friend and advocate ! happy they that have holy boldness and assurance in the prospect of that day, that look and wait for it, and for the Judge's appearance ! so do, and so may do the lovers of God ; their love to God assures them of God's love to them, and, consequently, of the friendship of the Son of God ; the more we love our friend, especially when we are sure that he knows it, the more we can trust his love : As God is good, and loving, and faithful to his promise, so we can easily be persuaded of his love, and the happy fruits of his love, when we can say, *Thou that knowest all things, knowest that we love thee ; and hope maketh not ashamed*, our hope, conceived by the consideration of God's love, will not defeat us, *because the love of God is shed abroad on our hearts by the holy Ghost, that is given to us*, Rom. v. 5. Possibly, here, by the love of God, may be meant our love to God, that is *shed abroad upon our hearts by the holy Ghost*, that is the foundation of our hope, or, of our assurance that our hope will hold good at last : Or, if by the love of God is meant the sense and apprehension of his love to us, yet that must suppose or include us as lovers of him in this case ; and, indeed, the sense and evidence of his love to us, *sheds abroad upon our hearts* love to him ; and thereupon we have confidence towards him, and peace and joy in him ; *he will give the crown of righteousness to all that love his appearing* ; and we have this boldness towards Christ, because of our conformity to him, *because as he is, so are we in this world*, ver. 17. love hath conformed us to him ; as he was the great lover of God and man, he hath taught us in our measure to be so too, and he will not deny his own image ; love teaches us to conform in sufferings too ; we suffer for him, and with him, and therefore cannot but hope and trust that we shall also be glorified together with him, 2 Tim. ii. 12.

2. It prevents, or removes, the uncomfortable result and fruit of servile fear ; *there is no fear in love*, ver. 18. so far as love prevails, fear ceases : We must here distinguish, I judge, between fear, and being afraid ; or, in this case, between the fear of God, and being afraid of him ; the fear of God is oft mentioned and commanded as the substance of religion, 1 Pet. ii. 17. Rev. xiv. 7. and so it imports the high regard and veneration we have for God, and his authority and government ; such fear is consistent with love, yea, with perfect love, as being in the angels themselves ; but then there is a being afraid of God, this arises from a sense of guilt, and a view of his vindictive perfections ; in the view of them God is represented as a *consuming fire* ; and so fear here may be rendered dread ; *there is no dread in love* ; love considers its object as good and excellent, and therefore amiable, and worthy to be beloved ; love considers God as most eminently good, and most eminently loving us in Christ, and so puts off dread, and puts on joy in him ; and as love grows, joy grows too ; so that *perfect love casteth out fear*, or dread : They that perfectly love God, are, from his nature, and counsel, and covenant, perfectly assured of his love, and, consequently, are perfectly free from any dismal, dreadful suspicions of his punitive power and justice, as armed against them : They well know that God loves them, and they thereupon triumph in his love : That *perfect love casteth out fear*, the apostle thus sensibly argues, that that casteth out torment, casteth out fear, or dread, *because fear hath torment*, ver. 18. fear is known to be a disquieting, torturing passion, especially such a fear as is the dread of an almighty, avenging God ; but *perfect love casteth out torment*, for it teaches the mind a perfect acquiescence and complacency in the beloved, and therefore *perfect love casteth out fear* : Or, which is here equivalent, *he that feareth, is not made perfect in love*, ver. 18. it is a sign that our love is far from being perfect, since our doubts, and



fears, and dismal apprehensions of God are so many: Let us long for, and hasten to the world of perfect love, where our serenity and joy in God will be as perfect as our love!

3. From the source and rise of it, which is the antecedent love of God: *We love him, because he first loved us*, ver. 19. His love is the incentive, the motive, and moral cause of ours: We cannot but love so good a God, that was first in the act and work of love; that *loved us* when we were both unloving and unlovely; that *loved us* at so great a rate; that has been seeking and soliciting our love at the expence of his Son's blood, and hath condescended to beseech us to be reconciled unto him: Let heaven and earth stand amazed at such love! His love is the productive cause of ours: *Of his own will* (of his own free, loving will) *begat he us*: *To those that love him all things work together for good, to them who are the called according to his purpose*; they that love God, are the called thereto according to his purpose, Rom. viii. 28. according to whose purpose they are called, is sufficiently intimated in the following clauses; *whom he did predestinate*, or antecedently purpose, viz. to the image of his Son, *them he also called*, effectually recovered thereto. The divine love instamped love upon our souls; may the Lord still, and further direct our hearts into the love of God! 2 *Theff.* iii. 5.

(2.) As love to our brother and neighbour in Christ; such love is argued and urged on these accounts:

1. As suitable and consonant to our Christian profession: In the profession of Christianity we profess to love God as the root of religion: *If then a man say*, or profess as much as thereby to say, *I love God*, I am a lover of his name, and house, and worship, *and yet hateth his brother*, whom he should love for God's sake, *he is a liar*, ver. 20. he therein giveth his profession the lye: That such a one loveth not God, the apostle proveth by the usual facility of loving what is seen, rather than what is unseen: *For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* ver. 20. The eye is wont to affect the heart; things unseen do less catch the mind, and thereby the heart; the incomprehensibleness of God does very much arise from his invisibility; the member of Christ has much of God visible in him; how then shall the hater of a visible image of God pretend to love the unseen original, the invisible God himself?

2. As suitable to the express law of God, and the just reason of it: *And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also*, ver. 21. As God has communicated his image in nature and in grace, so he would have our love to be suitably diffused: We must love God originally and supremely, and others in him, on the account of their derivation and reception from him, and of his interest in them: Now, our Christian brethren having a new nature, and excellent privileges, derived from God, and God having his interest in them as well as in us, it cannot but be a natural, suitable obligation, *that he that loves God, should love his brother also*.

## CHAP. V.

In this chapter the apostle asserts, 1. The dignity of believers, ver. 1. Then, 2. Their obligation to love, and the trial of it, ver. 1.—3. Then, 3. Their victory, ver. 4, 5. Then, 4. The credibility and confirmation of their faith, ver. 6.—10. Then, 5. The advantage of their faith in eternal life, ver. 11.—13. Then, 6. The audience of their prayers, unless for those that have sinned unto death, ver. 14.—17. Then, 7. Their preservation from sin and Satan, ver. 18. Then, 8. Their happy distinction from the world, ver. 19. Then, 9. Their true knowledge of God, ver. 20. Upon which they must depart from idols, ver. 21.

1. **W**Hosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him. 2. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. 3. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. 4. For whatsoever is born of God, overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, *even our faith*. 5. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

The apostle having, as was there observed, in the conclusion of the last chapter, urged Christian love upon those two accounts; 1. As suitable to Christian profession; 2. As suitable to the divine command; here adds a third; such love is suitable, or, indeed, demanded by their eminent relation; our Christian brethren, or fellow-believers, are nearly related to God, they are his children: *Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God*, ver. 1. Wherein the Christian brother is, 1. Described by his faith; he that *believeth that Jesus is the Christ*; that he is Messiah, the prince; that he is the Son of God, by nature and office; that he is the chief of all the anointed world; chief of all the priests, prophets, or kings, that were ever anointed by God, or for him; that he is perfectly prepared and furnished for the whole work of the eternal

salvation; and the believer accordingly yields himself up to his care and conduct; and then he is, 2. Dignified by his descent; *he is born of God*, ver. 1. this principle of faith, and the new nature that attends it, or from which it springs, is ingenerated by the Spirit of God; and so senship and adoption are not now appropriated to the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, nor to the ancient Israel of God; all believers, though, by nature, sinners of the Gentiles, are spiritually descended from God, and accordingly are to be beloved; as it is added, *every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him*, ver. 1. it seems but natural, that he that loves the Father, should love the children also; and that in some proportion to their resemblance to their Father, and to the Father's love to them; and so we must first and principally love the Son of the Father, as he is most emphatically styled, *Eph.* ii. 3. *the only* (necessarily) *begotten*, and *the Son of his love*, and then those that are voluntarily begotten, and renewed by the Spirit of grace; thereupon,

2. The apostle shews, 1. How we may discern the truth, or the true evangelical nature of our love to the regenerate, the ground of it must be our love to God, whose they are: *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God*, ver. 2. Our love to them appears to be sound and genuine, when we love them, not merely upon any secular account, as because they are rich, or learned, or kind to us, or of our denomination among religious parties, but because they are God's children, his regenerating grace appears in them, his image and superscription is upon them, and so in them God himself is loved; and so we see what that love to the brethren is, that is so pressed in this epistle; it is love to them as the children of God, and the adopted brethren of the Lord Jesus.

2. How we may learn the truth of our love to God, it appears in our holy obedience: *When we love God, and keep his commandments*, ver. 2. then we, truly, and in gospel account, *love God*, when we keep his commandments; for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and the keeping of his commandments requires a spirit inclined thereto, and delighting therein; and so his commandments are not grievous, ver. 3. Or, *this is the love of God*, that, as thereby we are determined to obedience, and to keep the commandments of God, so his commandments are thereby made easy and pleasant to us: The lover of God says, *O how I love thy law!* *I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart*, Psalm cxix. 32. when thou shalt either enlarge it with love, or with thy Spirit, that is the spring of love.

3. What is, and ought to be, the result and effect of regeneration, viz. an intellectual, spiritual conquest of this world: *For whatsoever is born of God*, or, as in some copies, *whosoever is born of God, overcometh the world*, ver. 4. he that is born of God, is born for God, and, consequently, for another world; he has a temper and disposition that tends to an higher, better world, and he is furnished with such arms, or such a weapon, whereby he can repel and conquer this; as it is added, *and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*, ver. 4. faith is the cause of victory, the means, the instrument, the spiritual armour and artillery by which we overcome; for, 1. In aid by faith we cleave to Christ, in contempt of, and opposition to the world. 2. Faith works in and by love to God and Christ, and so withdraws us from the love of the world. 3. Faith sanctifies the heart, and purifies it from those sensual lusts, by which the world obtains such sway and dominion over souls. 4. It receives and derives strength from the object of it, the Son of God, for conquering the frowns and flatteries of the world. 5. It obtains, by gospel promise, a right to the in-dwelling Spirit of grace, that is greater than he that dwells in the world. 6. It sees an invisible world at hand, with which this world is not worthy to be compared, and into which it tells the soul, in which it resides, it must be continually prepared to enter; and thereupon,

3. The apostle concludes, that it is the real Christian that is the true conqueror of the world. *Who is he* (then) *that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God*, ver. 5. It is the world that lies in our way to heaven; and is the great impediment to our entrance there. But he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God, believes therein, that Jesus came from God to be the Saviour of the world, and powerfully to conduct us from the world, to heaven and to God, who is fully to be enjoyed there. And he that so believes, must needs, by this faith, overcome the world. For, 1. He must be well satisfied that this world is a vehement enemy to his soul, to his holiness, his salvation, and his blessedness. *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world*, chap. ii. 16. 2. He sees it must be a great part of the Saviour's work, and of his own salvation, to be redeemed and rescued from this malignant world; *who gave himself for us, that he might deliver us from this present evil world*, Gal. i. 4. 3. He sees in and by the life and conduct of the Lord Jesus on earth, that this world is to be renounced and overcome. 4. He perceives that the Lord Jesus conquered the world, not for himself only, but for his followers; and they must study to be partakers of his victory. *Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world*. 5. He is taught and influenced by the Lord Jesus's death, to be mortified and crucified to the world. *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world*, Gal.



Gal. vi. 14. 6. He is begotten by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to the lively hope of a blessed world above, 1 Pet. i. 3. 7. He knows that the Saviour is gone to heaven, and is there preparing a place for his serious believers, John xiv. 2. 8. He knows that his Saviour will come again from thence, and will put an end to this world, and judge the inhabitants of it, and receive his believers to his presence and glory, John xiv. 3. 9. He is possessed with a spirit and disposition that cannot be satisfied with this world, that looks beyond it, and is still tending, striving, and pressing towards the world in heaven. *In this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon, with our house which is from heaven,* 2 Cor. v. 2. So that it is the Christian religion that affords its profelytes an universal empire. It is the Christian revelation that is the great means of conquering the world, and gaining another that is most pure and peaceful, blessed and eternal. It is there (in that revelation) that we see what is the occasion and ground of the quarrel and contest between the holy God and this rebellious world. It is there we meet with sacred doctrine (both speculative and practical) that is quite contrary to the tenour, temper and tendency of this world. It is by that doctrine that a spirit is communicated and diffused, that is superior and adverse to the spirit of the world. It is there we see that the Saviour himself was not of this world, that his kingdom was not and is not so; that it must be separated from the world, and gathered out of it for heaven and for God. There we see that the Saviour designs not this world for the inheritance and portion of his saved company. As he is gone to heaven himself, so he assures them he goes to prepare for their residence there, as designing they should always dwell with him; and allowing them to believe that if in this life, and this world only, they had hope in him, they should at last be but miserable. It is there that the eternal blessed world is most clearly revealed and proposed to our affection and pursuit. It is there we are furnished with the best arms and artillery against the assaults and attempts of the world. It is there we are taught how the world may be out-shot in its own bow, or its artillery turned against it self; and its oppositions, encounters and persecutions be made serviceable to our conquest of the world, and to our motion and ascent to the higher, heavenly world, and there we are encouraged by a whole army and cloud of holy soldiers, that have in their several ages, posts and stations overcome the world, and won the crown. It is the real Christian that is the proper hero; that vanquishes the world, and rejoices in an universal victory. And then (as being far superior to the Grecian monarch) mourns not that there is not another world to be subdued, but lays hold on the eternal world of life, and (in a sacred sense) takes the kingdom of heaven by violence too. Who in all the world, but the believer on Jesus Christ, can thus overcome the world?

6. This is he that came by water and blood, *even* Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood: and it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. 7. For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the holy Ghost: and these three are one. 8. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one. 9. If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son.

The faith of the Christian believer (or the believer in Christ) being thus mighty and victorious, it had need to be well founded; to be furnished with unquestionable, celestial evidence concerning the divine mission, authority and office of the Lord Jesus; and it is so; he brings his credentials along with him; and he brings them, 1. In the way, by which he came. 2. In the witness that attends him.

1. In the way and manner by which he came. Not barely, by which he came into the world; but by and with which he came, and appeared, and acted as a Saviour in the world; *this is he that came by water and blood.* He came to save us from our sins; to give us eternal life, and to bring us to God; and that he might the more assuredly do this, *he came by, or with, water and blood; even Jesus Christ.* Jesus Christ, I say, did so; and none but he. And I say it again, not by, or with, *water only, but by, and with, water and blood,* ver. 6. *Jesus Christ came with water and blood,* as the notes and signatures of the true effectual Saviour of the world. And he came by water and blood, as the means by which he would heal and save us. That he must and did thus come in his saving office, may appear, by our remembering these things. 1. We are inwardly and outwardly defiled. Inwardly, by the power and pollution of sin in our nature. For our cleansing from this, we need spiritual water; such as can reach the soul, and the powers of it. Accordingly, there is in and by Christ Jesus, *the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the holy Ghost.* And this was intimated to the apostles by our Lord, when he washed their feet; and said to Peter, that refused it, *Except I wash thee, thou hast no part in me.* Outwardly, by the guilt and condemning power of sin upon our persons. By this we are separated from God, and banished from his favourable, gracious, beatifick presence for ever. From this we must be purged by atoning blood. It is the law, or determination in the court of heaven, *that without shedding of blood, there shall be*

*no remission,* Heb. ix. 22. The Saviour from sin therefore must come with blood. 2. Both these ways of cleansing were represented in the old, ceremonial institutions of God. Persons and things must be purified by water and blood. *There were divers washings and carnal ordinances imposed till the time of reformation,* Heb. ix. 10. *The ashes of an heifer, mixt with water, sprinkling the unclean sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh,* Heb. ix. 13. Numb. xix. 9. *And likewise, almost all things are, by the law, purged with blood,* Heb. ix. 22. As these shew us our double defilement, so they indicate the Saviour's twofold purgation. 3. At, and upon the death of Jesus Christ, his side being pierced with a soldier's spear, out of the wound there immediately issued water and blood. This the beloved apostle saw, and seems to be affected with the sight; and he alone records it, and seems to reckon himself obliged to record it, as containing something mysterious in it. *And he that saw it, bare record, and his record is true: And he knoweth,* being an eye-witness, *that he saith true, that ye might believe,* and that ye may believe this particularly, *that out of his pierced side forthwith there came water and blood* John xix. 35. Now this water and blood are comprehensive of all that is necessary and effectual to our salvation. By the water, our souls are washed and purified for heaven, and the region of saints in light. By the blood, God is glorified, his law is honoured, and his vindictive excellencies illustrated and displayed. *Whom God hath set forth, or purposed, or proposed, a propitiation through faith in his blood,* or a propitiation in or by his blood through faith, *to declare his righteousness, that he may be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus,* Rom. iii. 25, 26. By the blood we are justified, reconciled, and presented righteous to God. By the blood, the curse of the law being satisfied, the purifying Spirit is obtained for the internal ablation of our natures. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit,* the promised Spirit, *through faith,* Gal. iii. 13, &c. The water as well as the blood issued out of the side of the sacrificed Redeemer. The water and the blood then comprehend all things that can be requisite to our salvation. They will consecrate and sanctify to that purpose all that God shall appoint or make use of in order to that great end. *He loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water, by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church,* Eph. v. 25, — 27. He that comes by water and blood is an accurate, perfect Saviour. And this is he, that comes by water and blood, even Jesus Christ! Thus we see in what way and manner, or, if you please, with what utensils, he comes. But see we his credentials also,

2. In the witness that attends him, and that is, the divine Spirit; that Spirit to whom the perfecting of the works of God is usually attributed. *And it is the Spirit that beareth witness,* ver. 6. It was meet that the commissioned Saviour of the world should have a constant agent to support his work, and testify him to the world. It was meet a divine power should attend him, his gospel and servants; and notify to the world, upon what errand and office they came, and by what authority they were sent: And this was done in and by the Spirit of God: According to the Saviour's own prediction, *He shall glorify me,* even when I shall be rejected and crucified by men, *for he shall receive, or take, of mine,* he shall not receive my immediate office; he shall not die and rise again for you; *but he shall receive of mine;* shall proceed on the foundation I have laid, shall take up my institution, and truth, and cause, and shall (further) *shew it unto you,* and by you to the world, John xvi. 14. And then the apostle adds the commendation, or the acceptableness of this witness, *because the Spirit is truth,* ver. 6. He is the Spirit of God and cannot lye. There is a copy that would afford us a very suitable reading thus; *because, of that, Christ is the truth.* And so it indicates the matter of the Spirit's testimony; the thing which he attests, and that is, the truth of Christ. *And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, that Christ is the truth;* and consequently that Christianity, or the Christian religion, is the truth of the day, the truth of God. But it is not meet, that one or two copies should alter the text; and our present reading is very agreeable; and so we retain it. *The Spirit is truth.* He is indeed the Spirit of truth, John xiv. 17. And that the Spirit is truth, and a witness worthy of all acceptation, appears in that he is an heavenly witness, or one of the witnesses that in and from heaven bare testimony concerning the truth and authority of Christ. *Because (or for) there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the holy Ghost, and these three are one.* And so ver. 7. most appositely occurs, as a proof of the authentickness of the Spirit's testimony; he must needs be true, or even truth it self, if he be not only a witness in heaven, but *even one* (not in testimony only, for so an angel may be, but in being and essence) *with the Father, and the Word.*

But here we are stopt in our course by the contest there is about the genuineness of ver. 7. It is alledged, that many old Greek manuscripts have it not. We shall not here enter into the controversy. It should seem, that the critics are not agreed what manuscripts have it, and what not; nor do they sufficiently inform us of the integrity and value of the manuscripts they peruse. Some may be so faulty, as I have an old printed Greek Testament full of errata, as that one would think no critick would establish a various lection thereupon: But let the judicious collators of copies manage that business: there are some rational surmises, that seem to



support the present text and reading. As, 1. If we admit *ver. 8.* in the room of *ver. 7.* it looks too like a tautology and repetition of what was included in *ver. 6.* *This is he that came by water and blood, not by water only, but by water and blood; and it is the Spirit that beareth witness. For there are three that bear witness; the Spirit, the water, and the blood.* This does not assign near so noble an introduction of these three witnesses as our present reading does. 2. It is observed that many copies read that distinctive clause, *upon the earth. There are three that bear record upon the earth.* Now this bears a visible opposition to some witnesses or witnesses elsewhere, and therefore we are told by the adversaries of the text, that this clause must be supposed to be omitted in most books that want *ver. 7.* But it should, for the same reason, be so in all. Take we *ver. 6.* *This is he that came by water and blood: And it is the Spirit that beareth witness; because the Spirit is truth:* It would not now naturally and properly be added, *for there are three that bear record on earth;* unless we would suppose, that the apostle would tell us that all the witnesses are such as are on earth, when yet he would assure us, that one is infallibly true, or even truth itself. 3. It is observed, that there is variety of reading even in the Greek text; as in *ver. 7.* Some copies read, *ἐν ἑστί, are one;* others (at least the *Complutensian*) *ἐν τὸ ἐν εἰς, are to one, or, agree in one;* and in *ver. 8.* (in that part that it is supposed should be admitted) instead of the common *ἐν τῇ γῆ, on earth,* the *Complutensian* reads, *ἐν τῇ γῆ, which seems to shew that that edition depended upon some Greek authority, and not merely, as some would have us believe, upon the authority either of the vulgar Latin, or of Thomas Aquinas;* though his testimony may be added thereto. 4. *Ver. 7.* is very agreeable to the style and the theology of our apostle, as, 1. He delights in the title: *The Father;* whether he indicates thereby God only, or a divine person distinguished from the Son. *I and the Father are one. And yet I am not alone; because the Father is with me. I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Grace be with—and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father,* Eph. ii. 3. Then, 2. The name, *the Word,* is known to be almost (if not quite) peculiar to this apostle. Had the text been devised by another, it had been more easy and obvious from the form of baptism, and the common language of the church, to have used the name Son, instead of that of the Word. As it is observed that Tertullian and Cyprian use that name, even when they refer to this verse; or, it is made an objection against their referring to this verse, because they speak of the Son, not the Word; and yet Cyprian's expressions seem to be very clear by the citation of Facundus himself. *Quod Johannis apostoli testimonium B. Cyprianus Carthagenensis antistes & martyr, in epistola five libro, quem de Trinitate scripsit, de Patre, Filio, & Spiritu sancto dictum intelligit; ait enim, dicit Dominus, Ego & Pater unum sumus; & iterum de Patre, Filio, & Spiritu sancto scriptum est, & hi tres unum sunt.* Now it is no where written, that these are one but in *ver. 7.* It is probable then, that St. Cyprian, either depending on his memory, or rather, intending things more than words, persons more than names, or calling persons by their names more usual in the church (both in popular and polemic discourses) called the second by the name of the Son, rather than of the Word. If any man can admit Facundus's fancy, viz. that St. Cyprian meant, that the Spirit, the water and the blood were indeed the Father, Word and Spirit that St. John said were one, he may enjoy his opinion to himself. For, 1. He must suppose that Cyprian not only changed all the names, but the apostle's order too. For the blood (the Son) which Cyprian puts second, the apostle puts last. And, 2. He must suppose, that Cyprian thought, that by the blood which issued out of the side of the Son, the apostle intended the Son himself, who might as well have been denoted by the water. That by the water, which also issued from the side of the Son, the apostle intended the person of the holy Ghost; that by the Spirit, which in *ver. 6.* is said to be truth, and in the gospel is called the Spirit of truth, the apostle meant the person of the Father; though he is no where else so called, when joined with the Son and the holy Ghost. Which had need of good proof, that the *Carthaginian* father could so understand the apostle. And he that so understands him, must believe too, that the Father, Son and holy Spirit are said to be three witnesses on earth. 3. *Facundus* acknowledges, that St. Cyprian says, that of his three it is written, *et hi tres unum sunt, and these three are one.* Now these are the words not of *ver. 8.* but of *ver. 7.* Not used concerning the three on earth, the Spirit, the water and the blood, but the three in heaven, the Father, and the Word, and the holy Ghost. So we are told, that the author of the book *De baptismo hæreticorum*, allowed to be contemporary with Cyprian, cites St. John's words, agreeably to the Greek manuscripts, and the ancient versions, thus, *Ait enim Johannes de Domino nostro in epistola nos docens, hic est qui venit per aquam & sanguinem, Jesus Christus non in aqua tantum, sed in aqua & sanguine; & Spiritus est qui testimonium perhibet, quia Spiritus est veritas; quia tres testimonium perhibent, Spiritus est aqua & sanguis, & isti tres in unum sunt.* If all the Greek manuscripts and ancient versions say concerning the Spirit, the water and the blood, that, *in unum sunt,* they agree in one then it was not of them that Cyprian spake, whatever variety there might be in the copies in his time, when he said it is written, *unum sunt,* they are one. And therefore Cyprian's words seem still to be a

firm testimony to *ver. 7.* and an intimation likewise, that a forger of the text would have scarce so exactly hit upon the apostolical name for the second witness in heaven, *the Word.* Then, 3. As this apostle only records the history of the water and blood flowing out of the Saviour's side, so it is he only, or he principally, that registers to us the Saviour's promise and prediction of the holy Spirit's coming to glorify him, and to testify of him, and to convince the world of its own unbelief, and of his righteousness, as in his gospel, *chap. xiv. 16, 17, 26. chap. xv. 26. chap. xvi. 7,—15.* It is most suitable then to the diction and to the gospel of this apostle, thus to mention the holy Ghost as a witness of Jesus Christ. Then, 5. It was far more easy for a transcriber, by turning away his eye, or by the obscurity of the copy, it being obliterated or defaced in the top or bottom of a page, or worn away in such materials as the ancients had to write upon, to lose and omit the passage, than for an interpolator to devise and insert it; he must be very bold and impudent, that could hope to escape detection and shame; and profane too, that durst venture to make an addition to a supposed sacred book: And, 6. It can scarce be supposed, that when the apostle is representing the strength of the Christian's faith in overcoming the world, and the foundation it relies upon in adhering to Jesus Christ, and the various testimony that was given to Jesus Christ in the world, he should omit the supreme testimony that attended him, especially when we consider, that he meant to infer, as he does, *ver. 9.* *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this, that he had rehearsed before, is the witness of God, which he hath testified of his Son.* Now in the three witnesses on earth, there is neither all the witness of God, nor, indeed, any witness that is truly and immediately God. The Antiritarian opposers of the text will deny that either the Spirit, or the water, or the blood are God himself; and others may say, that the Spirit here is some created effect of God; but, upon our present reading, here is a noble enumeration of the several witnesses and testimonies supporting the truth of the Lord Jesus, and the divinity of his institution; here is the most excellent abridgment or breviary of the motives to faith in Christ, of the credentials the Saviour brings with him of the evidences of our Christianity, that is to be found, I think, in the book of God; upon which single account, even waving the doctrine of the divine Trinity, the intire text is worthy of all acceptation.

Having these rational grounds on our side, we proceed: The apostle having told us that the Spirit that bears witness to Christ is truth, shews us that he is so, by assuring us that he is in heaven, and that there are others also, who cannot but be true, or truth itself, concurring in testimony with him; *for there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the holy Ghost, and these three are one,* *ver. 7.* Here is a Trinity of heavenly witnesses; such that have testified and avouched to the world the veracity and authority of the Lord Jesus in his office and claims; where the first that occurs in order is *the Father;* he sets his seal to the commission of the Lord Christ, all the while he was here; more especially, 1. In proclaiming him at his baptism, *Mat. iii. 17.* Then, 2. In confirming his character at the transfiguration, *Mat. xvii. 5.* Then, 3. In accompanying him with miraculous power and works. *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works, that ye may know and believe, that the Father is in me, and I in him,* John x. 37, 38. 4. In avouching at his death, *Mat. xxiv. 54.* 5. In raising him from the dead, and receiving him up to his glory. *He shall convince the world—of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more,* John xvii. 10. and *Rom. i. 4.* The second witness is the Word; a mysterious name! importing the highest nature that belongs to the Saviour, Jesus Christ; such as wherein he existed before the world was, and whereby he made the world, and whereby he was truly God with the Father. He must bear witness to the human nature or to the man Christ Jesus, in and by whom he redeemed and saved us; and he bore witness, 1. By the mighty works that he wrought, *John v. 17. My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.* 2. In conferring a glory upon him at his transfiguration. *And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,* John i. 14. 3. In raising him from the dead, *John ii. 19. Destroy this, temple, and in three days I will raise it up.* The third witness is the holy Ghost, or the holy Spirit; an august, venerable name! the possessor, proprietor, and author of holiness. True and faithful must he be, to whom the Spirit of holiness sets his seal and solemn testimony. So he did to the Lord Jesus, the head of the Christian world; and that in such instances as these, 1. In the miraculous production of his immaculate human nature in the Virgin's womb. *The holy Ghost shall come upon thee,* Luke i. 35, &c. 2. In the visible descent upon him at his baptism. *The holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape,* Luke iii. 22, &c. 3. In an effectual conquest of the spirits of hell and darkness. *If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you,* Matt. xii. 28. 4. In the visible, potent descent upon the apostles, to furnish them with gifts and powers to preach him and his gospel to the world, after he himself was gone to heaven, *Acts i. 4, 5. chap. ii. 2—4, &c.* In supporting the name, gospel and interest of Christ, by miraculous gifts and operations by and upon the disciples, and in the churches for two hundred years, *1 Cor. xii. 7.* Concerning which see Dr. Whitby's excellent discourse in the preface to the second volume of his *commentary on the New Testament.* These are witnesses in heaven



heaven; and they bear record from heaven; and they are one. It should seem, not only in testimony, (for that is implied in their being three witnesses; i. e. to one and the same thing) but upon an higher account, as they are in heaven; they are one in their heavenly being and essence. And if one with the Father, they must be one God.

2. To these there is opposed, though with them conjoined a trinity of witnesses on earth. Such as continue here below. *And there are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree in one*, ver. 8. Of these witnesses the first is the Spirit. This must be distinguished from the person of the holy Ghost, who is in heaven. We must say then with the Saviour (according to what is reported by this apostle), *that which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit*, John iii. 6. The disciples of the Saviour are, as well as others, born after the flesh. They come into the world, endued with a corrupt, carnal disposition, which is enmity to God. This disposition must be mortified and abolished. A new nature must be communicated. Old lusts and corruptions must be eradicated, and the true disciple become a new creature. The regeneration and renovation of souls is a testimony to the Saviour. It is his actual, though initial salvation. It is a testimony on earth, because it continues with the church there; and is not performed in that conspicuous, astonishing manner, in which signs from heaven are accomplished. To this Spirit belong not only the regeneration and conversion of the church, but its progressive sanctification, victory over the world, her peace, and love, and joy, and all that grace, by which she is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. Then the second is the Water. This was before considered as a means of salvation, now as a testimony to the Saviour himself, and intimates his purity and purifying power. And so it seems to comprehend, 1. The purity of his own nature and conduct in the world. *He was holy, harmless and undefiled*. 2. The testimony of John's baptism, who bore witness of him, and prepared a people for him, and referred them unto him, *Mark i. 4, 7, 8*. 3. The purity of his own doctrine, by which souls are purified and washed. *Now ye are clean through the word that I have spoken unto you*, John xv. 3. 4. The actual and active purity and holiness of his disciples. His body is the holy catholic church. *Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit*, 1 Pet. i. 22. And this signed and sealed by, 5. The baptism that he has appointed for the initiation or introduction of his disciples; in which he signally (or by that sign) says, *except I wash thee, thou hast no part in me. Not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God*, 1 Pet. iii. 21. Then there is, 3. The Blood: This he shed; and this was our ransom. This testifies for Jesus Christ: 1. In that it sealed up and finished the sacrifices of the Old Testament. *Christ our passover was sacrificed for us*. 2. In that it confirmed his own predictions, and the truth of all his ministry and doctrine, *John xviii. 37*. 3. In that it shewed unparalleled love to God, in that he would die a sacrifice to his honour and glory, in making atonement for the sins of the world, *John xiv. 30, 31*. 4. In that it demonstrated unspeakable love to us. And none will deceive those whom they entirely love, *John xiv. 13, 15*. 5. In that it demonstrated the disinterestedness of the Lord Jesus, as to any secular interest and advantage. No impostor and deceiver ever proposes to himself contempt, and violent cruel death, *John xviii. 36*. 6. In that it lays obligation on his disciples to suffer and die for him. No deceiver would invite profelytes to his side and interest at the rate that the Lord Jesus did. *Ye shall be hated of all men for my sake. They shall put ye out of their synagogues; and the time comes, that whosoever kills you, will think that he doth God service*, John xvi. 2. And he frequently calls his servants to a conformity with him in sufferings. *Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach*, Heb. xiii. 13. Which shews that neither he nor his kingdom is of this world. Then, 7. The benefits accruing and procured by his blood (well understood) must immediately demonstrate, that he is indeed the Saviour of the world. And then, 8. These are signified and sealed in the institution of his own supper. *This is my blood of the New Testament (which ratifies the New Testament) which is shed for many for the remission of sins*, Mat. xxvi. 28. Such are the witnesses on earth. Such is the various testimony given to the author of our religion. No wonder if the rejecter of all this evidence, be judged as a blasphemer of the Spirit of God, and be left to perish without remedy in his sins. These three witnesses (being more different than the three former) are not so properly said to be one, as to be for one; to be for one and the same purpose and cause; or to agree in one; in one and the same thing among themselves, and in the same testimony with those that bear record from heaven. Whereupon,

3. The apostle justly concludes, *if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God that he hath testified of his Son*, ver. 9. Where we have, 1. A supposition well founded upon the premises. Here is the witness of God; the witness whereby God hath testified of his Son; which surely must intimate some immediate, irrefragable testimony, and that of the Father concerning his Son; he has by himself proclaimed, and avouched him to the world. 2. The authority and acceptableness of his testimony; and that argued from the less to the greater. *If we receive the witness of men (and such testimony is and must be admitted in all judicatories, and in all nations) the witness of God is greater*. It is truth it self, of highest authority, and most unquestionable infalli-

bility. And then there is, 3. The application of the rule to the present case. *For this is the witness, and here is the witness, of God even of the Father, as well as of the Word and Spirit, which he hath testified of, and wherein he hath attested, his Son*. God, that cannot lye, hath given sufficient assurance to the world, that Jesus Christ is his Son; the Son of his love, and son by office, to reconcile and recover the world unto himself; he testified therefore the truth and divine original of the Christian religion, and that it is the sure appointed way and means of bringing us up to God.

10. He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the witness in himself: He that believeth not God, hath made him a lyer, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. 11. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son. 12. He that hath the Son, hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life. 13. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life; and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

In these words we may observe, 1. The privilege and stability of the real Christian. *He that believeth on the Son of God*, hath been prevailed with unfeignedly to cleave to him for salvation, *hath the witness in himself*, ver. 10. He hath not only the outward evidence that others have, but he hath in his own heart a testimony for Jesus Christ. He can alledge what Christ and the truth of Christ have done for his soul, and what he has seen and found in him. As, 1. He has deeply seen his sin, and guilt, and misery, and his abundant need of such a Saviour. 2. He has seen the excellency, beauty and office of the Son of God, and the incomparable suitableness of such a Saviour to all his spiritual wants and sorrowful circumstances. 3. He sees and admires the wisdom and love of God in preparing and sending such a Saviour to deliver him from sin and hell, and to raise him to pardon, peace and communion with God. 4. He hath found and felt the power of the word and doctrine of Christ, wounding, humbling, healing, quickening and comforting his soul. 5. He finds that the revelation of Christ, as it is the greatest discovery and demonstration of the love of God, so it is the most apt and powerful means of kindling, fomenting and enflaming love to the holy blessed God. 6. He is born of God by the truth of Christ; as ver. 1. He hath a new heart and nature; a new love, disposition and delight, and is not the man that formerly he was. 7. He finds yet such a conflict with himself, with sin, with the flesh, the world, and invisible wicked powers, as is described and provided for in the doctrine of Christ. 8. He finds such prospect, and such strength afforded him by the faith of Christ, that he can despise and overcome the world, and travel on towards a better. 9. He finds what interest the Mediator hath in heaven, by the audience and prevalence of those prayers that are sent thither in his name, according to his will, and through his intercession. 10. He is begotten again unto a lively hope, to a holy confidence in God, in his good will and love; to a pleasant victory over terrors of conscience, dread of death and hell: to a comfortable prospect of life and immortality, being enriched with the earnest of the Spirit, and sealed to the day of redemption. Such assurance has the gospel believer: he has a witness in himself. Christ is formed in him, and is growing up to the fulness and perfection, or perfect image, of Christ in heaven.

2. The aggravation of the unbeliever's sin; the sin of unbelief. *He that believeth not God, hath made him a lyer*: He does, in effect, give God the lye. *Because he believeth not the record, that God gave of his Son*, ver. 10. He must believe, either that God did not send his Son in the world, when he has given us such manifold evidence that he did. Or, that Jesus Christ was not the Son of God, when all that evidence relates to, and terminates upon him. Or, that he sent his Son to deceive the world, and to lead it into error and misery. Or, that he permits men to devise a religion, which, in all the parts of it, is a pure, holy, heavenly, undefiled institution, and so worthy to be embraced by the reason of mankind, and yet is but a delusion and a lye; and then lends them his Spirit and power, to recommend and obtrude it upon the world. Which is to make God the Father the author or abettor of the lye.

3. The matter, the substance, or contents of all this divine testimony concerning Jesus Christ. *And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life*. This is the sum and epitome of the whole record given us by all the aforeaid six witnesses. 1. *That God hath given to us eternal life*. He hath designed it for us in his eternal purpose. He hath prepared all the means that are necessary to bring us thither. He hath made it over to us by his covenant and promise. And he actually confers a right and title thereto, on all that believe on, and actually embrace the Son of God. Then, 2. *This life is in the Son*. The Son is life, eternal life in his own essence and person, *John i. 4. 1 Epist. i. 2*. He is eternal life to us; the spring of our spiritual and glorious life, *Col. iii. 4*. From him life is communicated to us, both here and in heaven. And thereupon it must follow, 1. *He that hath the Son, hath life*, ver. 12. He that is united to the Son, is united to life. He that hath title to the Son, hath title to life, to eternal life. Such honour hath the Father put upon the Son, Such honour must we put upon him too. We must come and



kiss the Son, and we shall have life. 2. *He that hath not the Son of God, hath not life*, ver. 12. He continues under the condemnation of the law, *John* iii. 36. He refuses the Son, who is life itself, who is the procurer of life, and the way to it. He provokes God to deliver him over to endless death, for making him a lyer; since he believes not this record, that God hath given concerning his Son.

4. The end and reason of the apostle's preaching this to believers. 1. For their satisfaction and comfort. *These things have I written unto you, that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life*, ver. 13. Upon all this evidence, and these witnesses, it is but just and meet that there should be those that believe on the name of the Son of God. God increase their number! How much testimony from heaven has the world to answer for! And to three witnesses in heaven must the world be accountable. These believers have eternal life. They have it in the covenant of the gospel; in the beginning and first-fruits of it within them, and in their Lord and head in heaven. These believers may come to know that they have eternal life, and should be quickened, encouraged and comforted in the prospect of it: And they should value the scriptures, that are so much written for their consolation and salvation. 2. For their confirmation and progress in their holy faith. *And that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God*, ver. 13. *i. e.* may go on believing. Believers must persevere, or they do nothing. To withdraw from believing on the name of the Son of God, is to renounce eternal life, and to draw back unto perdition. And therefore, the evidences of religion, and the advantage of faith, are to be presented to believers, in order to hearten and encourage them to persevere to the end.

14. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us. 15. And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desire of him. 16. If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say, that he shall pray for it. 17. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

Here we see, 1. A privilege belonging to faith in Christ; and that is, audience in prayer. *And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us*, ver. 14. The Lord Christ emboldens us to come to God in all circumstances, with all our supplications and requests. And through him our petitions are admitted and accepted of God. The matter of our prayer must be agreeable to the declared will of God. It is not fit that we should ask what is contrary either to his majesty and glory, or to our own good, who are his, and dependent on him. And then we may have confidence, that the prayer of faith shall be heard in heaven.

2. The advantage accruing to us by such privilege. *And if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him*, ver. 15. Great are the deliverances, mercies and blessings the holy petitioner needs. To know that his petitions are heard, or accepted, is as good as to know that they are answered; and therefore he that is so pitied, pardoned, counselled, sanctified, assisted and saved (or shall be so) as he is allowed to ask of God.

3. Direction in prayer in reverence to the sins of others. *If any man see his brother sin a sin, which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death: There is a sin unto death, I do not say, that he shall pray for it*, ver. 16. Where we may observe, 1. That we ought to pray for others, as well as for our selves; for our brethren of mankind, that they may be enlightened, converted, and saved; for our brethren in the Christian profession; that they may be sincere, and may be pardoned their sins, delivered from evils, and the chastisements of God, and preserved in Christ Jesus. 2. That there is a great distinction in the heinousness and guilt of sin. *There is a sin unto death*, ver. 16. *and there is a sin not unto death*, ver. 17. 1. *There is a sin unto death*. All sin, as to the merit and legal sentence of it, is unto death. *The wages of sin is death; and cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10. But there is sin unto death in opposition to such sin as is here said, not to be unto death. There is therefore, 2. A sin not unto death. And that surely must be all such sin, as by divine or human constitution may consist with life; in the human constitution, with temporal or corporal life; in the divine constitution with corporal, or with spiritual, evangelical life. 1. There are sins, that by human, righteous constitution, are not unto death; as divers pieces of injustice, which may be compensated without the death of the delinquent. In opposition to which there are sins, that by righteous constitution, are to death, or to a legal forfeiture of life. Such as we call capital crimes. Then there are sins that by divine constitution are unto death; and that, either death corporal, or spiritual and evangelical; 1. Such as are, or may be, to death corporal. And such may the sins be either of gross hypocrites, as Ananias and Sapphira, or, for ought we know, of sincere Christian brethren; as when the apostle says of the offending members of the church of Corinth: *For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*, 1 Cor. xi. 30.

There may be sin unto corporal death, among those that may not be condemned with the world. Such sin (I said) is, or may be, to corporal death. The divine, penal constitution in the gospel, does not positively and peremptorily threaten death to the more visible sins of the members of Christ, but only some gospel-chastisement; *for whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*, Heb. xii. 6. There is room left for divine wisdom or goodness, or even gospel-severity, to determine how far the chastisement, or the scourge shall proceed. And we cannot say, but that sometimes it may (*in terrorem*, for warning to others) proceed even to death. Then, 2. There are sins that by divine constitution are unto death spiritual and evangelical, that is, are inconsistent with spiritual and evangelical life; with spiritual life in the soul, and with an evangelical right to life above. Such are total impenitence and unbelief for the present; final impenitence and unbelief are infallibly to death eternal; as also a blaspheming of the Spirit of God in the testimony that he has given to Christ and his gospel, and a total apostasy from the light and convictive evidence of the truth of Christian religion. These are sins deriving the guilt of everlasting death. Then comes, 4. The application of the direction for prayer, according to the different sorts of sin, thus distinguished. The prayer is supposed to be for life. *He shall ask, and he (God) shall give them life*. Life is to be asked of God; he is God of life, and gives it when and to whom he pleases, and takes it away, either by his constitution, or providence, or both, as he thinks meet. In the case of a brother's sin, that is not (in the manner already mentioned) unto death, we may, in faith and hope, pray for him; and particularly, for the life of soul and body. But in case of the sin unto death, in the formentioned ways, we have no allowance to pray. Perhaps, the apostle's expression, *I do not say, he shall pray for it*, may intend no more than I have no promise for you in that case; no foundation for the prayer of faith. 1. The laws of punitive justice must be executed for the common safety and benefit of mankind. And even an offending brother in such a case must be resigned to publick justice (which, in the foundation of it, is divine) and at the same time also to the mercy of God. 2. The removal of evangelical penalties (as they may be called) or the prevention of death (that may seem to be so consequential upon, or inflicted for some particular sin) can be prayed for only conditionally or provisionally, *i. e.* with proviso, that it consist with the wisdom, will and glory of God, that they should be removed; and particularly, such death prevented. 3. We cannot pray that the sins of the impenitent and unbelieving should, while they are such, be forgiven them; or that any mercy of life or soul, that supposes the forgiveness of sin, should be granted to them while they continue such. But we may pray for their repentance (supposing them but in the common case of the impenitent world) and for their being enriched with faith in Christ; and thereupon, for all other saving mercies. 4. In case it should appear, that any have committed the irremissible blasphemy against the holy Ghost, and the total apostasy from the illuminating convictive powers of the Christian religion, it should seem, that they are not to be prayed for at all. For, *what remains but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, to consume such adversaries?* Heb. x. 27. And these last seem to be sins chiefly intended by the apostle, by the name of sins unto death. Then, 5. The apostle seems to argue, that there is sin that is not unto death, thus, *All unrighteousness is sin*, ver. 17. but were all unrighteousness unto death (since we have all some, unrighteousness towards God or man, or both, in omitting and neglecting something that is their due) then we were all peremptorily bound over to death: But since it is not so, the Christian brethren, generally speaking, having right to life, there must be sin that is not to death. Though there is not venial sin, in the common acceptation, there is pardoned sin; sin that does not derive a plenary obligation to eternal death. If it were not so, there could be no justification or continuance of the justified state. The gospel-constitution or covenant abbreviates, abridges, or rescinds the guilt of sin.

18. We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not, but he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. 19. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. 20. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true: and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. 21. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Here we have, (1.) A recapitulation of the privileges and advantages of the sound Christian believers: 1. They are secured against sin, against the fulness of its dominion, or the fulness of its guilt: *We know that whosoever is born of God*, and the believer in Christ is born of God, ver. 1. *sinneth not*, ver. 18. *sinneth not* with that fulness of heart and spirit as the unregenerate do, as was said, chap. iii. 6, 9. and, consequently, not with that fulness of guilt that attends the sins of others; and so he is secured against that sin that is unavoidably unto death, or that infallibly binds the sinner over unto the wages of eternal death; the new nature, and the inhabitation of the divine Spirit thereby, prevents the admission of such unpardonable sin. 2. They are fortified against the devil's destructive attempts: *He*



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*He that is begotten of God, keepeth himself*, i. e. is enabled to guard himself, *and the wicked one toucheth him not*, ver. 18. i. e. that the wicked one may not touch him, viz. to death. It seems not to be barely a narration of the duty, or the practice of the regenerate, but an indication of their power by virtue of their regeneration; they are thereby prepared and principled against the fatal touches, i. e. the sting of the wicked one; he touches not their souls to infuse that venom there that he does to others, or to expel that regenerative principle that is an antidote to his poison, or to induce them to that sin that, by gospel constitution, conveys an indissoluble obligation to eternal death; he may prevail too far with them to draw them to some acts of sin, but it seems to be the design of the apostle to assert, that their regeneration secures them from such assaults of the devil, as will bring them into the same case and actual condemnation with the devil.

3. They are on God's side and interest, in opposition to the state of the world : *And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness*, ver. 19. Mankind is divided into two great parties or dominions, that that belongs to God, and that that belongs to wickedness, or to the wicked one : The Christian believers belong to God, they are of God, and from him, and to him, and for him ; they succeed into the right and room of the ancient Israel of God, of whom it is said, *The Lord's people is his portion*, his estate in this world, *Jacob is the lot of his inheritance*, the dividend that is fallen to him by the lot of his own determination, *Deut. xxxii. 9.* while, on the contrary, *the whole world*, the rest, being by far the major part, *lieth in wickedness*, in the jaws, in the bowels of the wicked one : There are, indeed, were we to consider the individuals, many wicked ones, many wicked spirits in the heavenly, or the ethereal places, but they are united in wicked nature, policy, and principle ; and they are united also in one head ; there is the prince of the devils, and of the diabolical kingdom ; there is a head of the malignity, and of the malignant world ; and he has such sway here, that he is called *the god of this world* : Strange, that such a knowing spirit should be so implacably incensed against the Almighty, and all his interests, when he cannot but know that it must end in his own overthrow, and everlasting damnation ! How tremendous is the judgment of God upon that wicked one ! May the God of the Christian world continually demolish his dominion in this world, and translate souls into *the kingdom of his dear Son !*

4. They are enlightened in the knowledge of the true, eternal God : *And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true*, ver. 20. The Son of God is come into our world, and we have seen him, and know him by all the evidence that has already been asserted ; and he hath revealed unto us the true God, as *John i. 18.* and he hath opened our minds too, to understand that revelation ; given us an internal light in our understandings, whereby we may discern the glories of the true God ; and we are assured that it is the true God

that he hath discovered to us ; he is infinitely transcendent in purity, power, and perfection, to all the gods of the Gentiles ; he has all the excellencies, beauties, and riches, of the living and true God ; it is the same God that, according to Moles's account, made the heavens and the earth ; the same that took our fathers, the patriarchs, into peculiar covenant with himself ; the same that brought our ancestors out of Egypt, that gave us the fiery law upon mount Sinai ; that gave us his holy oracles, and promised the call and conversion of the Gentiles ; by his counsels and works, by his love and grace, by his terrors and judgments, we know that he, and he alone, in the fulness of his being, is the living and true God : It is a great happiness to know *the true God*, to know him in Christ, it is *eternal life*, John xvii. 3. It is the glory of the Christian revelation, that it gives the best account of *the true God*, and administers the best eye-salve for our discerning *the living and true God*.

5. They have an happy union with God, and his Son : *And we are in him that is true, even (or and) in his Son Jesus Christ*, ver. 20. The Son leads us to the Father, and we are in both ; in the love and favour of both ; in covenant and federal alliance with both ; in spiritual conjunction with both, by the inhabitation and operation of their Spirit ; and that you may know how great a dignity and felicity this is, you must remember, that this true one is *the true God, and eternal life* ; or rather, as it should seem a more natural construction, this same Son of God is himself also *the true God, and eternal life*, John i. 1. and here, chap. i. 2. so that, in union with either, much more with both, we are united to *the true God, and eternal life*. Then we have,

(2.) The apostle's concluding monition : *Little children*, ( dear children, as it has been interpreted ) *keep yourselves from idols*, ver. 21. Since ye know *the true God*, and *are in him*, let your light and love guard you against all that is advanced in opposition to him, or competition with him ; flee from the false gods of the heathen world ; they are not comparable to the God whose you are, and whom you serve ; adore not your God by statues and images, which share in his worship ; your God is an incomprehensible Spirit, and is disgraced by such sordid representations ; hold no communion with your heathen neighbours in their idolatrous worship, your God is jealous, and would have you come out, and be separated from among them ; mortify the flesh, and be crucified to the world, that they may not usurp the throne and dominion in the heart, which is due only to God ; the God whom you have known, is he that made you, that redeemed you by his Son, that has sent his gospel to you, that hath pardoned your sins, and begotten you unto himself by his Spirit, and given you eternal life ; cleave to him in faith, and love, and constant obedience, in opposition to all things ( brethren ) that would alienate your mind and heart from God. To this living and true God be glory and dominion for ever and ever.

*Amen.*

A N  
E X P O S I T I O N  
O F T H E  
Second Epistle of *JOHN*,  
With Practical Observations.

*Here we find a canonical epistle inscribed (principally) not only to a single person, but to one also of the softer sex : And why not to one of that sex ? In gospel redemption, privilege, and dignity, there is neither male nor female, they are both one in Christ Jesus ; our Lord himself neglected his own repast, to commune with the woman of Samaria, in order to shew her the fountain of life ; and, when almost expiring upon the cross, he would, with his dying lips, bequeath his blessed mother to the care of this beloved disciple, and thereby instruct him to respect female disciples for the future : It was to one of the same sex that our Lord chose to appear first after his return from the grave, and to send by her the news of his resurrection to this, as well as to the other apostles : And we find afterward a zealous Priscilla, so well acquitting herself in her Christian race, and, particularly, in some hazardous service towards the apostle Paul, that she is not only oft mentioned before her husband, but to her, as well as to him, not only the apostle himself, but also all the Gentile churches were ready to return their thankful acknowledgments : No wonder then that an heroine in Christian religion, honoured by divine providence, and distinguished by divine grace, should be dignified also by an apostolical epistle.*



*The apostle here salutes an honourable matron, and her children, ver. 1.—3. Recommends to them faith and love, ver. 5, 6. Warns them of deceivers, ver. 7. and to take heed to themselves, ver. 8. Teaches how to treat those that bring not the doctrine of Christ, ver. 10, 11. And referring other things to personal discourse, concludes the epistle, ver. 12, 13.*

1. **T**HE elder unto the elect lady, and her children, whom I love in the truth: and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth: 2. For the truths sake which dwell in us, and shall be with us for ever:

Ancient epistles began, as here, with salutation, and good wishes; religion consecrates, as far as may be, old forms, and turns compliments into real expressions of life and love: Here we have, as usually,

1. The saluter; not expressed by name, but by a chosen character: *The elder*. The expression, and title, and love do intimate, that the penman was the same with that of the foregoing epistle; he is now *the elder*, emphatically and eminently so; possibly, the oldest apostle now living; the chief *elder* in the church of God. An *elder* in the ancient house of Israel was reverend, or to be revered; much more he that is so in the gospel Israel of God: An old disciple is honourable, an old apostle and leader of disciples is more so: He was now old in holy service and experience, had seen and tasted much of heaven, and was much nearer than when at first he believed.

2. The saluted; a noble Christian matron, and her children: *To the elect lady, and her children*. A lady, a person of eminent quality for birth, breeding, and estate; it is well the gospel has got among such; it is pity but lords and ladies should be acquainted with the Lord Christ, and his religion; they owe more to him than others do; though, usually, *not many noble are called*: Here is a pattern for persons of quality of the same sex; *the elect lady*; not only a choice one, but one chosen of God; it is brave to see divine election running among the ladies; it is lovely and beautiful to see ladies, by holy walking, demonstrate their election of God; *and her children*; probably, the lady was a widow, she *and her children* then are the principal part of the family, and so this may be stiled an economical epistle; families may well be wrote to, and encouraged, and further directed in their domestick love, and order, and duties; we see that children may well be taken notice of in Christian letters, and they should know it too, it may avail to their encouragement and caution, they that love and commend them, will be apt to enquire after them; this *lady, and her children*, are further notified by the respect paid them, and that, 1. By the apostle himself; *whom I love in the truth*, or in truth; whom I sincerely and heartily love; he that was the beloved disciple, had learnt the art or exercise of love; and he especially loved those that loved him, (that Lord that loved him.) 2. By all her Christian acquaintance, all the religious that knew her; *and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth*; virtue and goodness, in an elevated sphere, shine bright; truth demands acknowledgment; they that see the evidences of pure religion, should confess and attest them; it is a good sign, and great duty, to love and value religion in others; then here is the ground of this love and respect thus paid to this *lady, and her children*; *for the truth's sake* (or true religion's sake) *which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever*: Christian love is founded upon the appearance of Christian, vital religion; likeness should beget affection; they that love truth and piety in themselves, should love it in others too; or love others upon the account of it; the apostle, and the other Christians, loved this lady, not so much for her honour, as her holiness; not so much for her bounty, as her serious Christianity: We should not be religious merely by fits and starts, in certain moods and moons, but religion should still dwell within us, in our minds and hearts, in our faith and love: It is to be hoped, that where religion once truly dwells, it will abide for ever: The Spirit of Christianity, we may suppose, will not be totally extinguished: *Which shall be with us for ever*.

3. Grace be with you, mercy and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love. 4. I rejoiced greatly, that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.

Here we see, 1. The salutation, which is, indeed, an apostolical benediction: *Grace be with you, mercy and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love*. Sacred love pours out blessings upon this honourable, Christian family; to them that have, more shall be given; these blessings are craved, (1.) *From God the Father*, the God of all grace, he is the fountain of blessedness, and of all the blessings that must bring us thither. (2.) *From the Lord Jesus Christ*, he is also author and communicator of these heavenly blessings, and he is distinguished by this emphatical character, *the Son of the Father*; such a Son as none else can be; such a Son as is *the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person*; who, with the

Father, is also *eternal life*, 1 John i. 2. from these divine persons is craved, 1. *Grace*; divine favour, and good-will; the spring of all good things; it is *grace* indeed that any spiritual blessings should be conferred on sinful mortals. 2. *Mercy*; free pardon and forgiveness; they that are already rich in *grace*, have need of continual forgiveness. 3. *Peace*, tranquillity of spirit, and serenity of conscience, in an assured reconciliation with God, together with all safe and sanctified outward prosperity; and these are desired *in truth and love*; either by sincere and ardent affection in the saluter, in faith and love he prays them *from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ*, or as productive of continued *truth and love* in the saluted, these blessings will continually preserve true faith and love in *the elect lady, and her children*; and may they do so!

2. The congratulation upon the prospect of the exemplary conversation of other children of this excellent lady: Happy parent, that was blessed with such a numerous, religious offspring! *I rejoiced greatly, that I found of thy children walking in the truth, as we have received commandment from the Father*. Possibly, the lady's sons travelled abroad, either for accomplishment, and acquaintance with the world, or on the account of their own business, or the common affairs of the family, and in their travels might come to Ephesus, where the apostle is now supposed to reside, and might there happily converse with him. See how good it is to be trained up to early religion! though religion is not to be founded upon education, yet education may be, and often is, blessed; and is the way to fortify youth against irreligious infection: And hence let young travellers learn to carry their religion along with them, and not either leave it at home, or learn the ill customs of the countries where they come: It may be observed also, that sometimes election runs in a direct line; here is an *elect lady, and her children*; children may be beloved for the parent's sake; but both by virtue of free *grace*: From the apostle's joy herein, we may observe, that it is pleasant to see children treading in good parents steps; and they that see this may well congratulate the parents thereupon, and that, both to excite their thankfulness to God for, and to enlarge their comfort in, so great a blessing: How happy a lady was this, that had brought forth so many children for heaven, and for God! And how great a joy must it be to her ladyship, to hear so good an account of them from so good a judge! And we may further see, that it is joyful to good old ministers, and, accordingly, to other good old disciples, to see a hopeful rising generation, that may serve God, and support religion in the world, when they are dead and gone: We see here also the rule of true walking; *the commandment of the Father*: Then is our walk true, our converse right, when it is managed by the word of God.

5. And now, I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. 6. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, that as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

We come now more into the design and substance of the epistle; and here we have, 1. The apostle's request: *Now, I beseech thee, lady*. Considering what it is that he intreats, the way of address is very remarkable; it is not any particular boon or bounty to himself, but common duty, and observance of divine command; here he might command, or charge; but harsher methods are worse than needful, where milder will prevail; and the apostolical spirit is, of all other, the most tender and endearing: Whether out of deference to her ladyship, or apostolical meekness, or both, he condescends to beseech: *And now, I beseech thee, lady*: He may be supposed speaking as another apostle does to a certain master to whom he writes: *Wherefore, though I might be much bold in Christ* (and according to the power with which Christ hath intrusted me) *to enjoin thee that which is convenient, yet, for love's sake, I rather beseech thee, being such a one as the aged, the elder*. Love will avail where authority will not; and we may often see, that the more authority is urged, the more it is slighted: The apostolical minister will love and beseech his friends into their duty.

2. The thing requested of the *lady, and her children*: Christian, sacred love; *that we love one another*, ver. 5. They that are eminent in any Christian virtue, have yet room to grow therein. *But as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you; for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another: But we beseech you, brethren* (and sisters) *that ye increase more and more*, 1 Thess. iv. 9, 10. This love is, (1.) Recommended, 1. From the obligation thereto: *The commandment*. Divine command should sway our mind and heart. 2. From the antiquity of the obligation: *Not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning*, ver. 5. This commandment of mutual Christian love may be said to be a new one, in respect of its new enactment and sanction by the Lord Christ; but yet, as to the matter of it (mutual holy love) it is as old as natural, Jewish, or Christian religion; this commandment must every where attend Christianity, that the disciples of it must *love one another*. Then this love is, (2.) Illustrated from the fruitful nature of it: *And this is love, that we walk after his commandments*, ver. 6. This is the test of our love to God, our obedience to him: *This is love* to ourselves, to our



own souls, that we walk in obedience to divine commands: *In keeping them there is great reward.* This is love to one another, to engage one another to walk in holiness; and this is the note of our sincere, mutual, Christian love, that we (in other things) walk after God's commands: There may be mutual love, that is not religious, and Christian; but we know ours to be so, by our attendance to all other commands besides that of mutual love; universal obedience is the proof of the goodness and sincerity of Christian virtues, and they that aim at all Christian obedience, will, to be sure, attend to Christian love; that is a fundamental duty in the gospel character: *This is the commandment, that as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it,* ver. 6. *i. e.* walk in this love: The foresight of the decay of this love, as well as of other apostasy, might engage the apostle to inculcate this duty, and this primordial command, the more frequently, the more earnestly.

7. For many deceivers are entred into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. 8. Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. 9. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

In this principal part of the epistle we find, 1. The ill news communicated to the lady; seducers are abroad: *For many deceivers are entered into the world.* This report is introduced by a particle that bespeaks a reason of the report; ye have need to maintain your love, for there are destroyers of it in the world; they that subvert the faith, destroy the love; the common faith is one ground of the common love; or, you must secure your walk according to the commands of God, that will secure you; your stability is like to be tried, *for many deceivers are entered into the world;* sad and sadning news may be communicated to our Christian friends; not that we should love to make them sorry; but to forewarn, is the way to forearm them against their trials: Now here is, 1. The description of the deceiver, and his deceit; he confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, ver. 7. he brings some error or other concerning the person of the Lord Jesus; he either confesses not that Jesus Christ is the same person, or that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the anointed of God, the Messiah promised of old for the redemption of Israel, or that the promised Messiah and Redeemer is come in the flesh, or into the flesh, into our world, and into our nature; such a one pretends that he is yet to be expected: Strange, that, after such evidence, any should deny, that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God, and Saviour of the world! 2. The aggravation of the case; such a one is a deceiver and an antichrist, ver. 7. he deludes souls, and undermines the glory and kingdom of the Lord Christ; he must be an impostor, a wilful deceiver, after all the light that has been afforded, and all the evidence that Christ hath given concerning himself, and the attestation God hath given concerning his Son; and he is a wilful opposer of the person, and honour, and interest of the Lord Christ, and, as such, shall be reckoned with when the Lord Christ comes again; let us not think it strange there are deceivers and opposers of the Lord Christ's name and dignity now, there were such of old, even in the apostles times.

2. The counsel given to this elect household hereupon; now care and caution is needful; *Look to yourselves,* ver. 8. The more deceivers and deceits do abound, the more watchful the disciples must be: Delusions may so prevail, as that even the elect may be endangered thereby: Two things they must beware of: 1. *That they lose not what they had wrought,* ver. 8. *i. e.* what they have done, or what they have gained; it is pity that any religious labour should be in vain; some begin well, but, at last, lose all their pains; the hopeful gentleman, that had kept the commands of the second table from his youth up, lost all for want of less love to the world, and more love to Christ; nor what they have gained; many have not only gained a fair reputation for religion, but much light therein, much conviction of the evil of sin, the vanity of the world, the excellency of religion, and the power of God's word; they have even *tasted of the powers of the world to come,* and the gifts of the holy Spirit, and yet, at last, lose all: *Ye did run well, who hindered ye, that ye should not obey* (or not go on to obey) *the truth?* Sad it is, that fair, splendid attainments in the school of Christ, should all be lost at last. 2. That they lose not their reward, none of it, no portion of that honour, or praise, or glory, that they once stood fair for; *that we* (or ye, as in some copies) *receive a full reward;* secure ye as full a reward, as will be given to any in the church of God; if there are degrees of glory, lose none of that grace (that light, or love, or peace) that is to prepare you for the higher elevation in glory; *hold fast that which thou hast* (in faith, and hope, and a good conscience) *that no man take thy crown;* that thou neither lose it, nor any jewel out of it, Rev. iii. 11. The way to attain the full reward, is to abide true to Christ, and constant in religion to the end.

3. The reason of the apostle's counsel, and of their care and caution about themselves; which is twofold: 1. The danger and evil

N<sup>o</sup>. 117.

of departure from gospel light, and revelation; it is, in effect and reality, a departure from God himself: *Whosoever transgresseth* (transgresseth at this diabolical rate) *and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God:* It is the doctrine of Christ that is appointed to guide us to God; it is that whereby God draws souls to salvation, and to himself; they that revolt from thence, in so doing, revolt from God. 2. The advantage and happiness of firm adherence to Christian truth; it unites us to Christ (the object, or subject matter of that truth) and, thereby, to the Father also; for they are one: *He that abideth* (rooted and grounded) *in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.* By the doctrine of Christ, we are enlightened in the knowledge of the Father and the Son; by it we are sanctified for the Father and the Son; and thereupon are enriched with holy love to the Father and the Son; and thereby prepared for the endless enjoyment of the Father and the Son. *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken to you,* John xv. 3. That purity makes meet for heaven: The great God, as he has set his seal to, so he puts a value upon the doctrine of Christ: We must retain that holy doctrine in faith and love, as we hope, or desire, to arrive at blessed communion with the Father and the Son.

10. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. 11. For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.

Upon due warning given concerning seducers, the apostle gives direction concerning the treatment of such; they are not to be entertained as the ministers of Christ; the Lord Christ will distinguish them from such, and so would he have his disciples: The direction is negative: 1. Support them not: *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine* (concerning Christ as the Son of God, the Messiah and Anointed of God, for our redemption and salvation) *receive him not into your house.* Possibly, this lady was like Gaius, whom we read of in the next epistle, a generous housekeeper, and hospitable entertainer of travelling ministers and Christians: These deceivers might, possibly, expect the same reception with others, or with the best that came there, as the blind are often bold enough, but the apostle allows it not; do not welcome them into your family; doubtless, such may be relieved in their pressing necessities; but not encouraged for ill service: But deniers of the faith are destroyers of souls; and it is supposed, that even ladies themselves should have good understanding in the affairs of religion. 2. Bless not their enterprizes: *Neither bid him God speed:* Attend not their service with your prayers, and good wishes: Ill work should not be consecrated, or recommended to the divine benediction; God will be no patron of falsehood, seduction, and sin: We ought to bid God speed to evangelical ministration; but the propagation of fatal error, if we cannot prevent, we must not dare to countenance. Then,

2. Here is the reason of such direction, forbidding the support and patronage of the deceiver: *For he that biddeth him God speed, is partaker of his evil deeds.* Favour and affection partake of the sin. We may be sharers in the iniquities of others. How judicious, and how cautious should the Christian be! There are many ways of sharing the guilt of other folks transgressions; it may be done by culpable silence, indolence, unconcernedness, private contribution, publick countenance and assistance, inward approbation, open apology and defence. The Lord pardon our guilt of other persons sins!

12. Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink; but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full. 13. The children of thy elect sister greet thee. Amen.

The apostle concludes this letter, 1. With an adjournment of many things to personal conference: *Having many things to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink; but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.* Where it is supposed, that some things are better spoke than wrote: A pen and ink may be a mercy, and a pleasure; but a personal interview may be more so: The apostle was not yet too old for travel, nor, consequently, for travelling service: The communion of saints should be, by all methods, maintained: Their communion should tend to their mutual joy: Excellent ministers may have their joy advanced by their Christian friends: *That I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me,* Rom. i. 12.

2. With the presentation of service and salutation from some near relations to the lady: *The children of thy elect sister greet thee.* Grace was abundant towards this family; here are two elect sisters, and, probably, their elect children: How will they admire this grace in heaven! The apostle condescends to insert the nieces duty (as we would call it) or dutiful salutation to their aunt: The duty of inferior relations is to be cherished: Doubtless, the apostle was easy of access, and would admit all friendly and pious communication, and was ready to enhance the good lady's joy in her nieces, as well as her children. May there be many such gracious ladies rejoicing in their gracious descendants, and other relations! Amen.



# A · N E X P O S I T I O N

OF THE

## Third Epistle of JOHN, With Practical Observations.

*Christian communion is exerted and cherished by letter : Christians are to be commended in the practical proof of their professed subjection to the gospel of Christ : The animating and countenancing of generous and publick-spirited persons, is doing good to many : To this end, the apostle sends this encouraging epistle to his friend Gaius, in which also he complains of the quite opposite spirit and practice of a certain minister, and confirms the good report concerning another, more worthy to be imitated.*

*In this epistle the apostle congratulates Gaius upon the prosperity of his soul, ver. 1, 2. Upon the same he had among good Christians, ver. 3, 4. Upon his charity and hospitality to the servants of Christ, ver. 5, 6. He complains of contemptuous treatment by an ambitious Diotrephes, ver. 9, 10. Recommends Demetrius, ver. 12. And hopes to visit Gaius shortly, ver. 13, 14.*

1. **T**HE elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. 2. Beloved, I wish above all things, that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth.

Here we see, 1. The sacred penman that writes and sends the letter ; not here indeed notified by his name, but a more general character, *The elder*. He that is so by years and by office, honour and deference is due to both. Some have questioned whether this were John the apostle, or no : But his stile and spirit seem to shine therein : They that are beloved of Christ, will love the brethren for his sake : Gaius could not question from whom the letter came : The apostle might have assumed many more illustrious characters, but it becomes not Christ's ministers to affect swelling, pompous titles. He almost levels himself with the more ordinary pastors of the church, while he styles himself, *The elder* : Or, possibly, most of the extraordinary ministers, the apostles, were now dead, and this holy survivor would countenance the continued standing ministry, by assuming the more common title, *The elder* : *The elders I exhort, who are all an elder*, 1 Pet. v. 1.

2. The person saluted and honoured by the letter ; the former was directed to an elect lady, this to a choice gentleman ; such are worthy of esteem and value ; he is notified, 1. By his name, *Gaius*. We read of several of that name, particularly of one whom the apostle Paul baptized at Corinth, who, possibly, might be also the apostle's host, and kind entertainer there, *Rom. xvi. 23*. if this be not he, it is his brother in name, estate, and disposition. Then, 2. By the kind expressions of the apostle to him, *the well beloved*, and *whom I love in the truth*. Love expressed is wont to kindle love. Here seems to be either the sincerity of the apostle's love, or the religion of it, and then there is both ; the sincerity of it, *whom I love in the truth*, whom I truly, cordially love ; the religion of it, *whom I love in the truth*, i. e. for the truth's sake, as abiding and walking in the truth, as it is in heaven. To love our friends for the truth's sake, is true love, religious, gospel love.

3. The salutation, or greeting ; containing a prayer, introduced by an affectionate compellation : *Beloved*, thou beloved one in Christ : The minister that would gain love, must shew it himself. Here is, 1. The apostle's good opinion of his friend, that his *soul prospered* ; there is such a thing as *soul prosperity* ; the greatest blessing on this side heaven ; this supposeth regeneration, and an inward fund of spiritual life ; this flock is increasing, and while spiritual treasures are advancing, the soul is in a fair way to the kingdom of glory. 2. His good wish for his friend, that his body may *prosper and be in health*, as well as his *soul* ; grace and health are two rich companions ; grace will improve health, health will employ grace ; it frequently falls out that a rich soul is lodged in a crazy body ; grace must be exercised in submission to such a dispensation ; we may well wish and pray that they that have *prosperous souls*, may have *healthful bodies* too ; their grace will shine in a larger sphere of activity.

3. For I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest

in the truth. 4. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth. 5. Beloved, thou dost faithfully whatsoever thou dost to the brethren, and to strangers ; 6. Which have born witness of thy charity before the church : whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well : 7. Because that for his names sake they went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles. 8. We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellow-helpers to the truth.

In these verses we have, 1. The good report that the apostle had received concerning this friend of his : *The brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee*, ver. 3. *which have born witness of thy charity before the church*, ver. 6. Where we may see, 1. The testimony, or thing testified, concerning Gaius ; *the truth that was in him* ; the reality of his faith, the sincerity of his religion, and devotedness to God ; and this evinced by his charity ; which includes his love to the brethren, kindness to the poor, hospitality to Christian strangers, and readiness to accommodate them for the service of the gospel ; *faith should work by love* ; it gives a lustre in and by the offices of love, and induces others to commend its integrity. 2. The witnesses ; *brethren that came from Gaius, testified, and bore witness* ; a good report is due from those that have received good ; though a *good name* is but a small reward for costly service, yet it is *better than precious ointment*, and will not be refused by the ingenuous and religious. 3. The auditory, or judicatory, before which the report and testimony was given ; *before the church* ; this seems to be the church at which the apostle now resided ; what church that was we are not sure ; what occasion they had thus to testify his faith and love *before the church* we cannot tell ; possibly, *out of the fulness of the heart the mouth spake* ; they could not but testify what they found and felt ; possibly, they would engage the church's prayer for the continued life and usefulness of such a patron, that he might *prosper and be in health, as his soul prospered*.

2. The report the apostle himself gives of him, introduced by an endearing appellation again ; *Beloved, thou dost faithfully whatsoever thou dost to the brethren, and to strangers*, ver. 5. 1. He was hospitable, *good to the brethren, even to strangers* ; it was enough to recommend them to Gaius's house, that they belonged to Christ ; or he was good *to the brethren* of the same church with himself, and to those that came from far ; *all of the household of faith* were welcome to him. 2. He seems to be of a catholic spirit ; he could overlook the petty differences among serious Christians, and be communicative to all that bore the image, and did the work of Christ. And, 3. He was conscientious in what he did ; *thou dost faithfully (thou makest faithful work of) whatsoever thou dost ; thou dost it as a faithful servant* ; and from the Lord Christ mayest thou expect the reward of the inheritance ; such faithful souls can hear their own praises without being puffed up ; the commendation of what is good in us, is designed, not for our pride, but for our encouragement to continue therein, and should be accordingly improved.

3. The apostle's joy therein, in the good report itself, and the good ground of it ; *I rejoiced greatly when the brethren came and testified, &c. ver. 3. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth*, i. e. in the precepts of Christian religion : The best evidence of our having the truth, is our *walking in the truth* : Good men will greatly rejoice in the soul prosperity of others ; and they are glad to hear of the grace and goodness of others ; *and they glorified God in me* : Love envieth not, but rejoiceth in the good name of other folks : As it is joy to good parents, it will be joy



joy to good ministers, to see their children evidence their truth in religion, and adorn their profession.

4. The direction the apostle gives his friend, concerning further treatment of the brethren that were with him: *Whom if thou bring forward on their journey after a godly sort, thou shalt do well.* It seemed customary, in those days of love, to attend travelling ministers and Christians, at least some part of their road, 1 Cor. xvi. 6. It is a kindness to a stranger to be guided in his way; a pleasure to travellers to meet with suitable company; this is a work that may be done *after a godly sort*, in a manner worthy of God, i. e. suitable to the deference and relation we bear to God; Christians should consider, not only what they must do, but what they may do; what they may most honourably and laudably do; *the liberal mind deviseth liberal, generous things*: Then Christians should do even the common actions of life, and of good-will, *after a godly sort*, as serving God therein, and designing his glory. Then,

5. The reasons of this directed conduct; these are two: 1. *Because that for his name's sake these brethren went forth, taking nothing of the Gentiles.* It appears thus that these were ministerial brethren; that they went forth to preach the gospel, and propagate Christianity; possibly, they might be sent out by this apostle himself; they *went forth* to convert *the Gentiles*; this was excellent service; they *went forth* for God and *his name's sake*; this is the minister's highest end, and should be his principal spring and motive, to gather, and to build up, a people *for his name*; they *went forth* also to carry a free gospel about with them; to make it unchargeable where they came; *taking nothing of the Gentiles*; these were worthy of double honour: There are those that are not called to preach the gospel themselves, that yet may much contribute to the progress of it; the gospel should be made without charge to those to whom it is first preached; they that know it not, cannot be expected to value it; the churches and Christian patriots ought to concur to support the propagation of holy religion in the pagan countries; publick spirits should concur according to their several capacities; they that are freely communicative of Christ's gospel, should be assisted by those that are communicative of their purses. 2. *We ought therefore to receive such, that we may be fellow-helpers to the truth*, i. e. to true religion. The institution of Christ is the true religion, it has been attested by God; they that are true in it, and true to it, will earnestly desire, and pray for, and contribute to, its propagation in the world; many ways may the truth be befriended and assisted; they that cannot themselves proclaim it, may yet receive, accompany, help and countenance those that do.

9. I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. 10. Wherefore if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. 11. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doth good, is of God: but he that doth evil, hath not seen God.

1. Here is a very different example and character. An officer, a minister in the church less generous, catholick and communicative than the private Christians. Ministers may sometimes be out-shone, out-done. In reference to this minister, we see, 1. His name: A Gentile name, *Diotrephes*; attended with an unchristian spirit. 2. His temper and spirit: Full of pride and ambition. *He loves to have the preeminence.* This ferment sprung and wrought betimes. It is an ill unbeseeming character of Christ's ministers, to love preeminence; to affect presidency and precedency in the church of God. 3. His contempt of the apostle's authority, and letter, and friends, of his authority. *The deeds which he doth*, contrary to our appointment, *prating against us with malicious words.* Strange, that the contempt should run so high! But ambition will breed malice against those that oppose it. Malice and ill will in the heart will be apt to vent it self by the lips. The heart and mouth are both to be watched. Of his letter. *I wrote to the church*, ver. 9. viz. in commendation of such and such brethren. *But Diotrephes receiveth us not*; admits not our letter and testimony therein. This seems to be the church, of which Gaius was a member. A gospel-church seems to be such a society, as to which a letter may be written and communicated. Gospel-churches may well expect and be allowed credentials with the strangers that desire to be admitted among them. The apostle seems to write by and with these brethren. To an ambitious, aspiring spirit, apostolical authority or epistle signifies but little. Of his friends, the brethren he recommended; *Neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would; and casteth them out of the church*, ver. 10. There might

some differences or different customs between the Jewish and the Gentile Christians. Pastors should seriously consider what differences are tolerable. The pastor is not at absolute liberty, nor Lord over God's heritage. It is bad to do no good our selves; but it is worse to hinder those that would. Church-power and church-censures are often abused. Many are cast out of the church, that should be received there with satisfaction and welcome. But woe to those that cast out the brethren, whom the Lord Christ will take into his own communion and kingdom! 4. The apostle's menace of this proud domineerer; *Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doth*, ver. 10. will remember to censure them. This seems to intimate apostolical authority. But the apostle seems not to hold an episcopal court, to which Diotrephes must be summoned; but will come to take cognizance of this affair, in the church to which it belongs. Acts of ecclesiastical domination and tyranny ought to be animadverted upon. May it be better agreed to whom that power belongs!

2. Here is counsel upon that different character; dissuasion from copying such a pattern, and indeed any evil at all. *Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good*, ver. 11. Imitate not such ecclesiastical, unchristian, pernicious evil; but pursue the contrary good in wisdom, purity, peace and love. Caution and counsel is not needless to those that are good already. Those cautions and counsels are most like to be accepted, that are seasoned with love. *Beloved, follow not that which is evil*; to this caution and counsel a reason is respectively subjoined. 1. To the counsel. *Follow that which is good.* For, *he that doth good* (naturally and genuinely doth good, as delighting therein) *is of God*, i. e. is born of God. The practice of goodness is the evidence of our filial, happy relation to God. 2. To the caution. *Follow not that which is evil.* *He that doth evil* (with bent of mind pursues it) *hath not seen God*, is not duly sensible of his holy nature and will. Evil-workers vainly pretend or boast an acquaintance with God.

12. Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth it self: yea, and we also bear record, and ye know that our record is true. 13. I had many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen write unto thee: 14. But I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee, Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.

Here we see, 1. The character of another person, one Demetrius; not much known otherwise. But here his name will live. A name in the gospel, a name in the churches, is better than that of sons and daughters. His character was his commendation. His commendation was, 1. General. *Demetrius has a good report of all men.* Few are well spoken of by all. And sometimes it is ill to be so. But universal integrity and goodness is the way to (and sometimes obtains) the universal applause. 2. Deserved and well founded. *And of the truth it self*, ver. 12. Some have a good report, but not of the truth it self. Happy they, whose spirit and conduct commend them before God and men. 3. Confirmed by the apostle's and his friends testimony. *Yea, and we also bear record*, and that with an appeal to Gaius's own knowledge: *And ye (you and your friends) know that our record is true.* Probably, this Demetrius was known to the church where the apostle now resided, and to that where Gaius was. It is good to be well known, or known for good. We must be ready to bear our testimony to those that are good. It is a debt to virtue and goodness. It is well for those that are commended, when those that commend them can appeal to the conscience of those that know them most.

2. The conclusion of the epistle. In which we may observe, 1. The referring of some things to personal interview. *I have many things to write, but I will not with ink and pen, but I trust I shall shortly see thee*, ver. 13, 14. Many things may be more proper for immediate communication, than for letter. A little personal conference may spare the time, trouble and charge of many letters. And good Christians may well be glad to see one another. 2. The benediction. *Peace be to you*; i. e. All felicity attend ye. They that are good and happy themselves, wish others so too. 3. The publick salutation sent to Gaius. *Our friends salute thee.* A friend to the propagation of religion deserves a common remembrance. And these pious persons shew their friendship to religion, as well as to Gaius. 4. The apostle's particular salutation of the Christians in Gaius's church or vicinity: *Greet the friends by name.* I doubt they were not very many, that must be so personally saluted. But we must learn humility as well as love. The lowest in the church of Christ should be greeted. And they may well salute and greet one another on earth, that hope to live together in heaven. And the apostle that had lain in Christ's bosom, lays Christ's friends in his heart.



# A N E X P O S I T I O N

OF THE

## General Epistle of J U D E,

### With Practical Observations.

*This epistle (as some few others are) is stiled general or catholick; for that it is not immediately directed to any particular person, family, or church, but to the whole society of Christians of that time, lately converted to the faith of Christ, whether from Judaism or Paganism. And it is and will be of standing, lasting and special use in and to the church as long as Christianity, that is, as time shall last.*

*Some of the chief things contained in it, summarily are, 1. An account of the penmen of it, a character of the church, the blessings and privileges of that happy society, ver. 1, 2. 2. The occasion of writing this epistle, ver. 3. 3. A character of evil and perverse men, who were already sprung up in that infant state of the church, and would be succeeded by others of the like evil spirit and temper in after times, ver. 4. 4. A caution against hearkening to and following after such, from the severity of God towards the unbelieving, murmuring Israelites at their coming out of Egypt, the angels that fell, the instance of Sodom and Gomorrha, their sin and punishment, ver. 5, 6, 7. 5. To these the apostle likens the seducers against whom he was warning them, and describes them at large from ver. 8.—13. inclusive. 6. Then (as specially suitable to his argument) he cites an ancient prophecy of Enoch foretelling and describing the future judgment, ver. 14, 15. 7. Enlargeth on the seducer's character, guards against the offence which honest minds might be apt to take at the so early permission of such things, by shewing that it was foretold long before, that so it must be, ver. 16, 17, 18, 19. 8. Exhort them to perseverance in the faith, fervency in prayer, watchfulness against falling from the love of God, and a lively hope of eternal life, ver. 20, 21. 9. Directs them how to carry themselves towards the erroneous and scandalous, ver. 22, 23. And, 10. Closes with an admirable doxology, in the two last verses.*

*This epistle (as most of the rest do) consists of, I. A preface, or introduction, ver. 1, 2. II. The body of the epistle, from ver. 3, to 23. inclusive. III. The conclusion by way of doxology, ver. 24, 25.*

*The general scope of it is much the same with that of the second chapter of the second epistle of Peter, which having been already explained, the less will need to be said on this.*

*It is designed to warn us against seducers and their seduction, to inspire us with a warm love to, and an hearty concern for truth, (evident and important truth) and that in the closest conjunction with holiness, of which charity, or sincere unbiassed, brotherly love, is a most essential character, and inseparable branch.*

*The truth we are to hold fast, and endeavour that others may be acquainted with, and not depart from, hath two special characters,*

*1. It is the truth as it is in Jesus, Eph. iv. 21.*

*2. It is the truth after (or which is according to) godliness, Tit. i. 1.*

*The gospel is the gospel of Christ, he hath revealed it to us, and he is the main subject of it; and therefore we are indispensably bound to learn from thence all we can of his person, natures and offices; indifferency as to this is inexcusable in any who call themselves Christians; and we know from what fountain we are wholly and solely to draw all necessary saving knowledge.*

*Further, it is also a doctrine of godliness, whatever doctrines favour the corrupt lusts of men, cannot be of God; let the pleas and pretensions for them be what they will. Errors dangerous to the souls of men, soon sprang up in the church. The servant slept, and tares were sown: but such was the wisdom and kindness of providence, that they began sensibly to appear and shew themselves, while some at least of the apostles were yet alive to confute them, and warn others against them. We are apt to think if we had lived in their times, we should have been abundantly fenced against the attempts and artifices of seducers, but we have their testimony and their cautions, which is sufficient; and if we will not believe their writings, neither would we have believed or regarded their sayings, if we had lived amongst them and conversed personally with them.*

*We come now to consider, I. The preface or introduction to this epistle, ver. 1, 2.*

**J** U D E the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preferred in Jesus Christ, and called: 2. Mercy unto you, and peace, and love be multiplied.

Here we have, 1. An account of the penmen of this epistle, Jude, or Judas, or Judah. He was name-fake to one of his ancestors, the patriarch son of Jacob, the most eminent, though not the first-born, of his sons; out of whose loins (lineally, in a most direct succession) the Messiah came. This was a name of worth, eminency and honour, yet, 1. He has a wicked name-fake. There was one Judas (one of the twelve) surnamed Iscariot (from the place of his birth) who was a vile traitor, the betrayer of his and our Lord. *The same names may be common to the best and worst persons.* It may be instructive to be called after the names of eminently good men, but there can be no inference drawn thence what we shall prove, though we may even thence conclude what sort of persons our good parents or progenitors desired and hoped we should be. But, 2. Our Judas was quite another man. He was an apostle, so was Iscariot; but he was a sincere disciple and follower of Christ, so was not the other. He was a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, the other was his

betrayer and murderer; therefore here the one is very carefully distinguished from the other. Dr. Manton's note upon this is, that God takes great care of the good name of his sincere and useful servants. Why then should we be prodigal of our own or one another's reputation and usefulness? Our apostle here calls himself a servant of Jesus Christ, esteeming that a most honourable title. It is more honourable to be a sincere and useful servant of Christ, than to be an earthly king, how potent and prosperous soever. He might have claimed kindred to Christ, according to the flesh, but he waves that, and rather glories in being his servant.

Observe, It is really a greater honour to be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, than to be a-kin to him according to the flesh. Many of Christ's natural kindred, as well as of his progenitors perished: not from want of natural affection in him as man, but from infidelity and obstinacy in themselves; which should make the descendants and near relatives of persons most eminent for sincere and exemplary piety, *jealous our selves with a good jealousy.* A son of Noah may be saved in the ark from a flood of temporal destruction, and yet be overwhelmed at last in a deluge of divine wrath, and suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. Christ himself tells us, *that he that heareth his word and doth it, namely, he only, is as his brother, sister and mother,*



mother, i. e. more honourably and advantageously related to him, than the nearest and dearest of his natural relatives, considered merely as such. See *Matt.* xii. 48, 49, 50.

Note further, in that the apostle Jude styles himself a servant, though an apostle, *a dignified officer in Christ's kingdom*; that it is a great honour to the meanest sincere ministers, (and it holds proportionably as to every upright Christian) that he is the servant of Christ Jesus. They were servants before they were apostles, and they were but servants still. Away then with all pretensions in the ministers of Christ to lordly dominion either over one another, or the flocks committed to their charge. Let us ever have that of our dear Redeemer in actual view, *it shall not be so among you*, *Matt.* xx. 25, 26. And brother of James, to wit, of him, whom the ancients stile the first bishop of Jerusalem, of whose character and martyrdom Josephus makes mention, and ascribes the horrible destruction of that city and nation, to this wicked cruelty, as one of its principal causes\*: Of this James, our Jude, was brother, whether in the strictest or a larger (though very usual) acceptation I determine not. He however reckons it an honour to him, that he was the brother of such a one. We ought to honour those who are above us in age, gifts, graces, station; not to envy them, yet neither to flatter them, nor be led merely by their example, when we have reason to think they act wrong. Thus the apostle Paul withstood his fellow-apostle Peter to the face, notwithstanding the high esteem he had of him, and the affectionate love he bare to him, when he saw that he was to be blamed, i. e. really blame-worthy, *Gal.* ii. 11. and following verses.

2. We are here acquainted to whom this epistle is directed; namely, to all them *who are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called*. I begin with the last, *called*, i. e. called Christians, viz. in the judgment of charity, farther than which we cannot, nor in justice ought to go in the judgment or opinions we form or receive of one another; for what appears not, is not, nor ought to come into account in our dealings with, and censures of one another, whatever abatements the divine goodness may see fit to make for an honest, though misguided zeal. The church pretends not (I am sure it ought not) to judge of *secret or hidden things*, or drawn into the light before the time, lest our rash and preposterous zeal do more harm, than ever it has done, or, I am afraid, ever will do good. *The tares and wheat* (if Christ may be judge) *must grow together till the harvest*, *Matt.* xiii. 28, 29, 30. And then he himself will, by proper instruments, take timely care to separate them. We ought to think the best we can of every man till the contrary appear; not be forward to receive or propagate, much less invent disadvantageous characters of our brethren. This is the least we can make of the apostle's large and excellent description of charity, *1 Cor.* xiii. and this we ought to make conscience of acting up to, which till we do, the Christian churches will, as, alas! they are at this day, be filled with *envying and strife, confusion, and every evil work*, *Jam.* iii. 16. Or *called to be christians*, by the preaching of the word, which they gladly receive, and profess cordially to believe, and so are received into the society and fellowship of the church, viz. Christ the head, and believers the members; real believers really, professed believers visibly.

Christians are the *called*, called out of the world, the evil spirit and temper of it; above the world, to higher and better things, heaven, &c. things unseen and eternal; called from sin to Christ, from vanity to seriousness, from uncleanness to holiness; and this in pursuance of divine purpose and grace; *for whom he did predestinate, them he also called*, *Rom.* viii. 30. Now they who are thus called are, 1. *Sanctified*; *sanctified by God the Father*. Sanctification is usually spoken of in scripture, *as the work of the holy Spirit*, yet here it is ascribed to *God the Father*, because the Spirit works it as the *Spirit of the Father and the Son*. Note, all who are effectually called, are sanctified; *made partakers of a divine nature*, *2 Pet.* i. 4. *For without holiness no man shall see the Lord*, *Heb.* xii. 14.

Observe, Our sanctification is not our own work: If any are sanctified, they are so by God the Father, not excluding Son or Spirit, for they are one, i. e. one God. Our corruption and pollution is of our selves; but our sanctification and renovation is of God, and his grace; and therefore if we perish in our iniquity, we must bear the blame; but if we be sanctified and glorified, all the honour and glory must be ascribed to God, and to him alone. I own, it is hard to give a clear and distinct account of this, but we must not deny or disregard necessary truth, because we cannot fully reconcile the several parts of it to each other; for on that supposition, we might deny that any one of us could stir an inch from the place we are at present in, though we see the contrary every day and hour.

2. The called and sanctified are *preserved in Christ Jesus*. As it is God who begins the work of grace in the souls of men, so it is he who carries it on, and perfects it. Where he begins, he will perfect; though we are fickle, he is constant; *he will not forsake the work of his own hands*, *Psal.* cxxxviii. 8. Let us not therefore trust in our selves, nor in our *stock of grace already received*, but in him, and in him alone; still endeavouring by all proper and appointed means, *to keep our selves, as ever we would hope he should keep us*.

*Preserved*] from the gates of hell, and to the glory of heaven.

\* See *Josephus*, *Book* 20. *chap.* 3, and *Euseb.* *Ecc. Hist.* *B.* 2. *ch.* 22.

*Preserved in Christ Jesus.*] Observe, all who are preserved, are preserved in Jesus Christ; in him as their *citadel and strong hold*, no longer than they abide in him, and solely by virtue of their union with him.

3. The apostolical benediction; *mercy to you, &c. From the mercy, peace, and love of God all our comfort flows, all our real enjoyment of this life, all our hope of a better*.

1. The mercy of God is the spring and fountain of all the good we have or hope for. Mercy not only to the miserable, but the guilty.

2. Next to mercy is peace, which we have from the sense of having obtained mercy. We can have no true and lasting peace, but what flows from our reconciliation with God by Jesus Christ.

3. As from mercy springs peace, so from peace springs love; *his love to us, our love to him, and our brotherly love*, (forgotten, wretchedly neglected grace!) *to one another*.

These the apostle prayeth may be multiplied, that Christians may not be content with scraps, and narrow scantlings of them; but that souls and societies may be top brim, swimming full of them. Note, God is ready to supply us with all grace, and a fulness in each grace. We are not straitened, if we are straitened in him, but in our selves.

3. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation: it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

II. We have here the design of the apostle in writing this epistle to the lately converted Jews and Gentiles, namely, to establish them in the Christian faith, and *a practice and conversation truly consonant and conformable therunto, and in an open and bold profession thereof*; especially in times of notorious opposition, whether by artful seduction, or violent and inhumane persecution.

But then we must see to it very carefully that it be really *the Christian faith* that we believe, profess, propagate and contend for; not the discriminating badges of this or the other party; not any thing of later date than the inspired writings of the holy evangelists and apostles.

Here observe, 1. That the gospel-salvation is a common salvation, i. e. in a most sincere offer and tender of it to all of mankind, whom the notice of it reaches: For so the commission runs, *Matt.* xvi. 15, 16. *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, &c.* Sure God means as he speaks, he doth not delude us with vain words, whatever men do, and therefore none are excluded from the benefit of these gracious offers and invitations, but they who obstinately, impenitently, finally exclude themselves. *Whoever will may come and drink of the water of life freely*, *Rev.* xxii. 17.

The application of it is made to all believers and only to such; it is made to the weak as well as to the strong; let none discourage themselves on the account of hidden decrees which they can know little of, and with which they have nothing to do. God's decrees are dark, his covenants are plain. "All good Christians meet in Christ the common head, are acted by one and the same Spirit, are guided by one rule, meet here at one throne of grace, and hope shortly to meet in one common inheritance;" a glorious one to be sure, but what, or how glorious we cannot, nor at present need to know; but such it will be, as vastly to exceed all our present hopes and expectations.

2. This common salvation is the subject matter of the faith of all the saints: The doctrine of it is what they all most heartily consent to; they esteem it as a *faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance*, *1 Tim.* i. 15. It is the faith once, or at once, once for all, delivered to the saints; to which nothing can be added, from which nothing may be detracted, in which nothing, more nor less, should be altered. Here let us abide; here we are safe; if we stir a step farther we are in danger to be either entangled or seduced.

3. The apostle and evangelists all wrote to us of this common salvation. This cannot be doubted by those who have carefully read their writings. It is hard any should think they wrote chiefly to maintain particular schemes and opinions, especially such as they never did, nor could think of. It is enough that they have fully declared to us, by inspiration of the holy Ghost, all that is necessary for every one to believe and do, in order to obtain a personal interest in the common salvation.

4. They who preach or write of the common salvation should give all diligence to do it well. Not allow themselves to offer to God, or his people, that which cost them nothing, or next to nothing; little or no pains or thought, *2 Sam.* xxiv. 24. This were to treat God irreverently, and man unjustly.

The apostle (though inspired) gave all diligence to write of the common salvation, what then will become of those, who (though uninspired) give no diligence, or next to none, but say to the people (even in the name of God) *quicquid in buccam venerit*, what comes next; so they use scripture words, care not how they interpret or apply them? They who speak of sacred things, ought always to speak of them with the greatest reverence, care and diligence.

5. They who have received the doctrine of this common salvation, must contend earnestly for it.



*Earnestly, not furiously.*] They who strive for the Christian faith, or in the Christian course, must strive lawfully, or they lose their labour, and run great hazard of losing their crown, 2 Tim. ii. 5. *The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God*, Isa. i. 20. *Lying for the truth is bad, and scolding for it is not much better.*

Observe, They who have received the truth, must contend for it. But how? As the apostles did; by suffering patiently and courageously for it, not by making others suffer if they will not presently embrace every notion that we are pleased (proved or unproved) to call faith, or fundamental. We must not suffer our selves to be robbed of any essential article of Christian faith, by the cunning craftiness, or specious plausible pretences of *any who lie in wait to deceive*, Eph. iv. 14. The apostle Paul tells us, *he preached the gospel (mind it was the gospel) with much contention*, 1 Thes. ii. 2. i. e. (as I understand it) with great earnestness, with an hearty zeal, and a great concern for the success of what he preached. But if we will understand contention in the common acceptation of the word, we must impartially consider *with whom the apostle contended, and how*; the enlarging on which would not be proper for this place.

III. We have here the occasion the apostle had to write to this purpose; as evil manners give rise to good laws, so dangerous errors often give just occasion to the proper defence of important truth.

4. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Here observe, 1. That ungodly men are the great enemies of the faith of Christ, and the peace of the church. They who deny or corrupt the one, and disturb the other, are here expressly stiled ungodly men. We might have truth with peace (a most desirable thing) were there none (ministers or private Christians) in our particular churches and congregations but truly godly men. A blessing scarcely to be looked or hoped for on this side heaven. Ungodly men raise scruples, start questions, cause divisions, widen breaches, merely to advance and promote their own selfish, ambitious and covetous ends. This has been the plague of the church in all past ages, and I am afraid no age is or will be wholly free from such men and such practices, as long as time shall last.

The late excellent Mr. Henry's pious and charitable note on this passage (and I wish it were duly laid to heart by all of us who yet survive) is, that nothing cuts us off from the church, but that which cuts us off from Christ; namely, reigning infidelity and ungodliness.

We must, as he goes on excellently, abhor the thought of branding particular parties, I add, or persons, with this character; especially the doing it without the least proof, or as it too often happens, the least shadow of it.

Those are ungodly men, *who live without God in the world*, who have no regard to God and conscience.

They, as the good man goes on, are to be dreaded, and consequently to be avoided, not only who are wicked by sins of commission, but also who are ungodly by sins of omission; who, for example, *restrain prayer before God*, who dare not reprove a rich man, when it is the duty of their place so to do, for fear they lose his favour, and the advantage they promise themselves therefrom, who *do the work of the Lord negligently*, &c.

2. That they are *the worst of ungodly men, who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness*, i. e. who take encouragement to sin more boldly, because the grace of God hath abounded, and doth still abound wonderfully; who are hardened in their impieties, by the extent and fulness of gospel-grace, the design of which is to reduce men from sin, and bring them unto God. Thus therefore to wax wanton under so great grace, and turn it into an occasion of working all uncleanness with greediness, and hardning our selves in such a course by that very grace, which is the last and most forcible means to reclaim us from it, is to render our selves the vilest and the worst, and most hopeless of sinners.

3. They who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, do in effect deny the Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, i. e. (as Mr. Henry well expresseth it) they deny both natural and revealed religion.

They, as he justly goes on, strike at the foundation of natural religion, *for they deny the only Lord God*; and they overturn all the frame of revealed religion, *for they deny the Lord Jesus Christ*. Now his great design in establishing his, i. e. revealed religion in the world, was to bring us unto God.

Note, *They who deny our Lord Jesus Christ*, do in effect deny the only Lord God. To deny revealed religion, is virtually to overcome natural religion; for they stand or fall together, and they naturally yield light and force to each other. Would to God our modern deists, who live in the midst of gospel-light, would seriously consider this, and cautiously, diligently, and impartially examine what it is that hinders their receiving the gospel, while they profess themselves fully persuaded of all the principles and duties of natural religion! Never two tales answered more exactly to each other than these do, so that it seems absurd to receive the one, and reject the other. One would think it were the fairer way to receive both, or

reject both; though, perhaps, the more plausible method, especially in this age, is to act the part they do.

4. They who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, are ordained unto condemnation; so Mr. Henry, and, no doubt, it is a great truth. They, as he speaks, sin against the last, the greatest, and most perfect remedy; and so are without excuse. They who thus sin, must needs die of their wounds, of their disease; are of old ordained to this condemnation, whatever that expression means. But what if our translators had thought fit to have rendered the word in the original, which I shall not trouble the English reader with, of old fore-written of, as persons who would, through their own sin and folly, become the proper subjects of this condemnation, where had the harm been? plain Christians had not been troubled with dark, doubtful and perplexing thoughts about reprobation, which the strongest heads cannot enter far into, can indeed bear but little of, without much loss and damage. Is it not enough that early notice was given by inspired writers, that such seducers and wicked men should arise in later times, and that every one being forewarned of, should be forearmed against them?

5. We ought to contend earnestly for the faith, in opposition to those who would corrupt or deprave it; such as are *crept in unawares*; a wretched character, to be sure, but oft very ill applied by weak and ignorant people, and even by those who themselves *creep in unawares*, who think their *ipse dixit* should stand for a law to all their followers and admirers. Surely, faithful, humble ministers are helpers of their peoples joy, peace, comfort, *not lords of their faith*! Whoever attempt to corrupt the faith, we ought to contend earnestly against them. The more busy and crafty the instruments and agents of Satan are to rob us of the truth, the more solicitous should we be to hold it fast: Always provided we be very sure that we fasten no wrong or injurious characters on persons, parties, or sentiments.

IV. The fair warning which the apostle in Christ's name gives to those, who having professed his holy religion, do afterwards desert and prove false to it.

5. I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. 6. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day. 7. Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.

We have here a recital of the former judgments of God upon sinners, with design to awaken and terrify those to whom warning is given in this epistle.

Observe, The judgments of God are often denounced and executed *in terrorem*, for warning to others, rather than from immediate or particular displeasure against the offenders themselves; not that God is not displeased with them, but, perhaps, not more with them, than with others, who at least, for the present, do escape.

*I will put you in remembrance.*] Observe, That what we do already know, we still need to be put in remembrance of. Therefore there will always be need and use of a standing, stated ministry in the Christian church, though all the doctrines of faith, the essentials, are so plainly revealed, in express words, or by the most near, plain, and immediate consequence, that he who runs may read and understand them. There wants no infallible interpreters, really or conceitedly such, for any such end or purpose. Some people do (weakly enough) suggest, if the scriptures do so plainly contain all that is necessary to salvation, what need or use can there be of a standing ministry? Why may we not content our selves with staying at home, and reading our bibles? But hold, not so fast; fair and softly. The inspired apostle has here fully, though not wholly answered this objection. Preaching is not designed to teach us something new, in every sermon, somewhat that we knew nothing of before; but to put us in remembrance, to call to mind things forgotten, to affect our passions, and engage and fix our resolutions, that our lives may be answerable to our faith.

*Though you know these things, yet* (as good Mr. Henry says) *you still need to know them better.* There are many things we have known, which yet we have unhappily forgotten. Is it of no use or service to be put afresh in remembrance of them?

Now, what are these things (I use the very words of the late excellent Mr. Henry, which, in this exposition, which is designed, and accordingly modelled as a small part of the continuation of his, I always do, where I well can) which we Christians need to be put in remembrance of?

1. The destruction of the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness, ver. 5. St. Paul puts the Corinthians in mind of this, 1 Cor. x. the ten first verses of that chapter (as the scripture is always the best commentary upon itself) are the best explication of this fifth verse of this epistle of Jude; none therefore ought to presume upon their privileges, since many who were brought out of Egypt by a series of



of amazing miracles, yet perished in the wilderness, by reason of their unbelief; *let us not therefore be high-minded, but fear*, Rom. xi. 20. *Let us fear lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it*, Heb. iv. 1. They had miracles plenty, they were (as Mr. Henry styles it) their daily bread, yet even they perished in unbelief: We have greater (much greater) advantages than they had; let their error (their so fatal error) be our awful warning.

2. We are here *put in remembrance* of the fall of the angels, ver. 6.

There were a great number of the angels who left their own habitation, i. e. who were not pleased with the posts and stations the supreme Monarch of the universe had assigned and allotted to them, but thought (like discontented ministers in our age, I might say, in every age) they deserved better; they would, with the title of ministers, be sovereigns, and, in effect, the sovereign should be their minister, do all, and only what they would have him; thus was pride the main and immediate cause or occasion of their fall.

Thus they quitted their post, and rebelled against God, their Creator, and sovereign Lord; but God did not spare them (high and great as they were) he would not truckle to them, he threw them off, as a wise and good prince will a selfish and deceitful minister, and the great, the all-wise God, could not be ignorant, as the wisest and best of earthly princes often are, what designs they were hatching.

After all, what became of them? they thought to have dared and outfaced Omnipotence itself, but God was too hard for them, he cast them down to hell; they who would not be servants to their Maker, and his will, in their first state, were made captives to his justice, and are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness: Here see what the condition of fallen angels is, they are in chains bound under the divine power and justice, bound over to the judgment of the great day; they are under darkness, who were once angels of light; so horribly in the dark are they, that they continue to fight against God, as if there were yet some small hope, at least, left them of prevailing and overcoming in the conflict: Dire infatuation! light and liberty concur, chains and darkness, how well do they agree, and suit each other?

The devils, once angels in the best sense, are reserved, &c.

Observe, There is, undoubtedly there is, a judgment to come; the fallen angels are reserved to the judgment of the great day; and shall fallen men escape it? surely no: Let every reader consider this in due time.

Their chains are called everlasting, because it is impossible they should ever break loose from them, or make an escape; they are held fast and sure under them; the decree, the justice, the wrath of God, are the very chains under which fallen angels are held so fast: Hear, and fear, O sinful mortals of mankind!

3. The apostle here calls to our remembrance the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, ver. 7. *Even as*, &c. and it is in allusion to the destruction of Pentapolis, or the five cities, that the miseries of the damned are set forth by a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; they were guilty of abominable wickedness, not to be named or thought on but with the utmost abhorrence and detestation; their ruin is a particular warning to all people to take heed of, and fly from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul, 1 Pet. ii. 11.

These lusts consumed the Sodomites with fire from heaven, and they are now suffering the vengeance of eternal fire; therefore take heed, imitate not their sins, lest the same plagues overtake you as did them: God is the same holy, just, pure Being now as then; and can the beastly pleasures of a moment, make amends for your suffering the vengeance of eternal fire? Stand in awe therefore, and sin not, Psalm iv. 4.

V. The charge the apostle exhibits against deceivers, who were now seducing the disciples of Christ from the profession and practice of his holy religion.

8. Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. 9. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil, he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. 10. But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts; in those things they corrupt themselves. 11. Wo unto them; for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gain-saying of Core. 12. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of wind; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots: 13. Raging waves of the sea, foming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

He calls them *filthy dreamers*, forasmuch as delusion is a dream, and the beginning of, and inlet to, all manner of filthiness.

Note, Sin is filthiness; it renders men odious and vile in the sight of the most holy God, and makes them (sooner or later as penitent,

or as punished to extremity, and without resource) vile in their own eyes, and, in a while, they become vile in the eyes of all about them.

These filthy dreamers dream themselves into a fool's paradise on earth, and into a real hell at last; let their character, course, and end, be our seasonable and sufficient warning; like sins will produce like punishments and miseries.

1. They defile the flesh; the flesh, or body, is the immediate seat, and often the irritating occasion of many horrid pollutions, yet these, though done in and against the body, do greatly defile, and grievously maim and wound the soul; fleshly lusts do war against the soul, 1 Pet. ii. 11. and in 2 Cor. vii. 1. we read of filthiness of flesh and spirit, each of which, though of different kinds, defile the whole man.

2. They despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities; are of a disturbed mind, and a seditious spirit; forgetting that the powers that be, are ordained of God, Rom. xiii. 1. God requires us to speak evil of no man, Tit. iii. 2. but it is a great aggravation of the sin of evil-speaking, when what we say is pointed at magistrates, men whom God has set in authority over us, whom by blaspheming, or speaking evil of, we blaspheme God himself.

Or, if we understand it with respect to religion, as some do, that ought to have the dominion in this lower world; such evil-speakers despise the dominion of conscience, make a jest of it, and would banish it out of the world; and for the word of God, the rule of conscience, they despise that, the revelations of the divine will go for little with them; they are a rule of faith and manners, but not till they have explained them, and imposed their sense of them upon all about them.

Or, as others account for the sense of this passage, the people of God, truly, and specially so, are the dignities here spoken of, or referred to, according to that of the psalmist, Psalm cv. 15. Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

They speak evil of, &c.] Observe, Religion, and its serious professors, have been always, and every where evil-spoken of, though there is nothing in religion but what is very good, and deserves our highest regards; both as it is perfective of our natures, and salutary to our truest and highest interests; yet this sect, as its enemies are pleased to call it, is every where spoken against, Acts xxviii. 22.

On this occasion the apostle brings in Michael the archangel, &c. ver. 9.

Interpreters are at a loss what is here meant by the body of Moses; some think, that the devil contended that Moses might have a public and honourable funeral, that the place where he was interred might be generally known, hoping, thereby, to draw the Jews, so naturally prone thereto, to a new and fresh instance of idolatry. Dr. Scot thinks, that, by the body of Moses, we are to understand the Jewish church, whose destruction the devil strove and contended for, as the Christian church is called the body of Christ, in the New Testament stile. Others bring other interpretations, which I will not here trouble the reader with.

Though this contest was mighty eager and earnest, and Michael was victorious in the issue, yet he would not bring a railing accusation against the devil himself; he knew a good cause needed no such weapons to be employed in its defence; it is said, he durst not bring, &c. Why durst he not? not that he was afraid of the devil, but he believed God would be offended, if, in such a dispute, he went that way to work; he thought it below him to engage in a trial of skill with the great enemy of God and man which of them should out-sold or out-rail the other: A memorandum, faith good Mr. Henry, to all disputants never to bring railing accusations into their disputes: Truth needs no supports from falsehood or scurrility. Some say, Michael would not bring a railing accusation against the devil, as knowing beforehand that he would be too hard for him at that weapon; (Mr. Henry.) Some think, the apostle refers here to the remarkable passage we have, Numb. xx. 7,—14. Satan would have represented Moses under disadvantageous colours, which he, good man, had, at that time, and upon that occasion, given but too much handle for: Now Michael, according to this account, stands up in defence of Moses, and, in the zeal of an upright and bold spirit, says to Satan, The Lord rebuke thee: He would not stand disputing with the devil, nor enter into a particular debate about the merits of that special cause; he knew Moses was his fellow-servant, a favourite of God, and he would not patiently suffer him to be insulted; no, not by the prince of devils; but, in a just indignation, cries out, The Lord rebuke thee: Like that of our Lord himself, Matt. iv. 10. Get thee hence, Satan. Moses was a dignity, a magistrate, one beloved and preferred by the great God; and the archangel thought it insufferable that such a one should be so treated by a vile apostate spirit, of how high an order soever. So the lesson hence is, "That we ought to stand up in defence of those whom God owns, how severe soever Satan and his instruments are in their censures of them, and their conduct." They who censure (in particular) upright magistrates, upon every slip in their behaviour, may expect to hear, The Lord rebuke thee; and divine rebukes are harder to be borne than careless sinners now think for.

Ver. 10. But these speak evil of the things which they know not, &c. Observe, They who speak evil of religion and godliness, speak evil of the things which they know not; for if they had known them, they would have spoke well of them; for nothing but good and excellent



lent can be truly said of religion ; and it is sad any thing different or opposite should ever be justly said of any of its professors ; a religious life is the most safe, happy, comfortable, and honourable life that is.

Observe, That men are most apt to *speakevil* of those persons and things which they know least of : How many had never suffered by slanderous tongues, if they had been better known ; as, on the other hand, retirement screens some even from just censure.

*But what they know naturally, &c.]* Observe, It is hard, if not impossible, to find any obstinate enemies to the Christian religion, who do not, in their stated course, live in open or secret contradiction to the very principles of natural religion ; this many think hard and uncharitable, but, I am afraid, it will appear too true, in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God : The apostle likens such to *brute beasts*, though they often think and boast themselves, if not the wisest, yet, at least, the wittiest part of mankind.

*In those things they corrupt themselves.]* i. e. in the plainest, and most natural, and necessary things ; things that lie most open and obvious to natural reason and conscience ; even in those things they corrupt, debase, and defile themselves ; the fault, whatever it is, lies not in their understandings, or apprehensions, but in their depraved wills, disordered appetites, and affections ; they could and might have acted better, but then they must have offered violence to those vile affections, which they obstinately chose rather to gratify than mortify.

*Ver. 11.* He represents them as followers of Cain, and, in *ver. 12, 13.* as atheistical and profane people, that thought little, and, perhaps, believed not much of God, or a future world ; as greedy and covetous, who, so they could but gain present worldly advantages, cared not what came next ; rebels to God and man, who, like Core, run into attempts in which they must assuredly perish, as he did.

*Ver. 12.* These are spots in your feasts of charity ; the ἀγῶμαι, or love feasts, so much spoken of by the ancients ; these happened, by whatever means or mischance, to be admitted among them, but were spots in them, defiled, and defiling. Observe, It is a great reproach, though unjust and accidental, to religion, when they, who profess it, and join in the solemnest institution of it, are in heart and life unsuitable, and even contrary to it.

*These are spots.]* Yet how common in all Christian societies here on earth, the very best not excepted, are such blemishes ! the more is the pity ! the Lord remedy it in his due time and way ; not in mens blind and rigorous way of plucking up the wheat with the tares : But in the heaven we are waiting, hoping, and preparing for, there is none of this mad work, none of these disorderly doings.

*When they feast with you, they feed themselves without fear.]* Ar-rant gluttons, no doubt, they were ; such as only minded the gratifying of their appetites with the daintiness and plenty of their fare ; they had no regard to Solomon's caution, *Prov. xxiii. 2.*

Mr. Henry's note on this passage is, In common eating and drinking an holy fear is necessary, much more in feasting ; though we may sometimes be more easily and insensibly overcome at a common meal, than at a feast ; for, in the case supposed, we are left upon our guard, and sometimes, at least to some persons, the plenty of a feast is its own antidote, as to others it may prove a dangerous snare.

*Clouds they are without water.]* Which promise rain in time of drought, but perform nothing of what they promise : Such is the case of formal professors, who, at first setting out, promise much, like early blossoming trees in a forward spring, but in conclusion bring forth little or no fruit.

*Carried about of winds.]* Light and empty, easily driven about this way or that, as the wind happens to fit ; such are empty, ungrounded professors, an easy prey to every seducer : It is amazing to hear many talk so confidently of so many things of which they know little, or nothing, and yet have not the wisdom and humility to discern and be sensible how little they know ! How happy would our world be, if men either knew more, or practically knew how little they know !

*Trees whose fruit withereth, &c.]* Trees they are, for they are planted in the Lord's vineyard, yet fruitless ones.

Observe, They, whose fruit withereth, may be justly said to be without fruit ; as good never a whit, as never the better : It is a sad thing when men seem to begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh ; which is almost as common a case, as it is an awful one.

The text speaks of such as being twice dead ; one would think, to be once dead were enough ; we none of us, till grace renew us to a higher degree than ordinary, love to think of dying once, though this is appointed for us all : What then is the meaning of this being twice dead ? Take Mr. Henry's answer, in his own words : " They had been once dead in their natural, fallen, lapsed state ; but they seemed to recover, and, as a man in a swoon, to be brought to life again, when they took upon them the profession of the Christian religion ; but now they are dead again, by the evident proofs they have given of their hypocrisy ; whatever they seemed, they had nothing truly vital in them."

*Plucked up by the roots.]* As we commonly serve dead trees, from which we expect no more fruit ; they are dead, dead, dead ; why cumber they the ground away with them to the fire.

*Ver. 13.* Raging waves of the sea.] Boisterous, noisy, and cla-

morous ; full of talk and turbulency, but with little (if any) sense or meaning.

*Foaming out their own shame.]* Creating much uneasiness to men of better sense, and calmer tempers, which yet will, in the end, turn to their own greater shame, and just reproach. The psalmist's prayer ought always to be that of every honest and good man : *Let integrity and uprightness preserve me*, Psalm xxv. 21. and if it will not, let me be unpreserved : If honesty signify little now, knavery will signify much less, and that in a very little while.

*Raging waves* are a terror to sailing passengers, but when they are got to port, the waves are forgotten, as no longer in being ; their noise and terror is for ever ended.

*Wandering stars.]* Planets that are errattick in their motions, keep not that steady, regular course the fixed ones do, but shift their stations, that one has sometimes much ado to know where to find them : This allusion carries in it a lively emblem of false teachers, who are sometimes here, and sometimes there, so that one knows not where nor how to fix them : In the main things, at least, one would think, something should be fixed and steady ; and, I should think, this might be, without infallibility, or any pretensions to it, in us poor mortals : In religion and politicks, the great subjects of present debate, surely there are certain *flamina* in which wise and good, honest and disinterested men might agree, without throwing the populace into the utmost anguish and distress of mind, or blowing up their passions into rage and fury, without letting them know what they say, or whereof they affirm.

*To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.]* Observe, False teachers are to expect the worst of punishments in this, and a future world : Not every one who teacheth, by mistake, any thing that is not exactly true ; for who then, in any publick assembly, durst open a bible to teach others, unless he thought himself equal or superior to the angels of God in heaven ? but who prevaricates, dissembles, would lead others into by-paths and side-ways, that he may have opportunity to make a gain or prey of them, or (in the apostle's phrase) to make merchandize of them, 2 Pet. ii. 3. But enough of this. As for the blackness of darkness for ever, I shall only say, that this terrible expression, with all the horror it imports, belongs to false teachers, truly, not slanderously, so called, who corrupt the word of God, and betray the souls of men : And if this will not make both ministers and people cautious, I know not what will.

VI. The doom of this wicked people is declared.

14. And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, 15. To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. 16. These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts ; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having mens persons in admiration because of advantage.

This prophecy of Enoch we have no mention made of in any other part or place of scripture, yet now it is scripture, that there was such a prophecy ; one plain text of scripture is proof enough of any one point that we are required to believe, especially when relating to a matter of fact ; but in matters of faith, necessary, saving faith, God has not seen fit, blessed be his holy name, he has not, to try us so far ; there is no fundamental of Christian religion, truly so called, which we have not inculcated over and over in the New Testament ; by which we may know what the holy Ghost does, and, consequently, we ought, to lay the greatest stress upon. Some say this prophecy of Enoch was preserved by tradition in the Jewish church ; others, that the apostle Jude was immediately inspired with the notice of it : Be that how it will, it is certain there was such a prophecy of ancient date, of long standing, and universally received in the Old Testament church ; and it is a main point of our New Testament creed.

Observe, That Christ's coming to judgment was prophesied of as early as the middle of the patriarchal age, and was therefore even then a received and acknowledged truth.

*The Lord cometh with his holy myriads ;]* including both angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. What a glorious time will that be, when Christ shall come with ten thousand of these ? And we are told for what great and awful ends and purposes he will come so accompanied and attended, namely, to execute judgment upon all.

Observe, It was spoken of then, so long ago, as a thing just at hand ; Behold, the Lord cometh ; he is just a coming, he will be upon you before you are aware, and, unless you be very cautious and diligent, before you are provided to meet him comfortably. He cometh, 1. To execute judgment upon the wicked. 2. To convince them.

Observe, Christ will condemn none without precedent, trial, and conviction ; such conviction as shall, at least, silence even themselves ; they shall have no excuse or apology to make, that they either can or dare then stand by ; then every mouth shall be stopped, the judge and his sentence shall be (by all the impartial) approved and applauded, and even the guilty condemned criminals shall be speech-



speechless, though, at present, they want not bold and specious pleas, which they vent with all assurance and confidence; and yet it is sure the mock-trials of prisoners in the goal among themselves, and the real trial at the bar before the proper judge, soon appear to be very different things.

I cannot pass this fifteenth verse without taking notice how often, and how emphatically the word *ungodly* is repeated in it; no less than four times; *ungodly men, ungodly sinners, ungodly deeds*, and, as to the manner, *ungodly committed*. Godly or *ungodly* signifies little with men now a-days, unless it be to scoff at and deride even the very expressions; but it is not so in the language of the holy Ghost.

Observe, Omissions, as well as commissions, must be accounted for in the day of judgment.

Observe farther, *Hard speeches* of one another, especially if ill-grounded, will most certainly come into account at the judgment of the great day: Let us all take care in time. If thou, faith one of our good old puritans, smite (a mis-called heretick, or) a schismatick, and God find a real saint bleeding, look thou to it, how thou wilt answer it; *it may be too late to say before the angel, it was an error*, Eccles. v. 6. I only here allude to that expression of the divinely inspired writer.

In the sixteenth verse the apostle enlarges farther on the character of these evil men, and seducers; they are *murmurers, complainers, &c.*

Observe, That a murmuring, complaining temper, indulged and expressed, lays men under a very ill character; such are very weak at least, and, for the most part, very wicked; they murmur against God and his providence, against men and their conduct; they are angry at every thing that happens, and never pleased with their own state and condition in the world, as not thinking it good enough for them.

Such *walk after their own lusts*.] Their will, their appetite, their fancy, is their only rule and law. Mr. Henry's note here is, That they who please their sinful appetites, are most prone to yield to their ungovernable passions.

VII. The exhortation the apostle here gives to those to whom he wrote, which, with the doxology in the two last verses, concludes the epistle.

17. But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ: 18. How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. 19. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. 20. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the holy Ghost, 21. Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. 22. And of some have compassion, making a difference: 23. And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. 24. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Ver. 17. But, beloved, remember, &c.] Remember, take heed that ye think it not strange (*viz.* so as to stumble, and be offended, and have your faith staggered by it) that such people as the seducers before described and warned against should arise (and that early) in the Christian church, seeing all this was foretold by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, consequently, the accomplishment of it in the event, is a confirmation of your faith, instead of being, in the least, an occasion of shaking and unsettling you therein.

Observe, 1. They who would persuade, must make it evident that they sincerely love those whom they would persuade; "bitter words and hard usage never did, nor never will convince, much less persuade any body."

Observe, 2. The words which inspired persons have spoken (or written) duly remembered and reflected on, are the best preservative against dangerous errors; this will always be so, till men have learnt to speak better than God himself.

Observe, 3. We ought not to be offended if errors and persecutions arise and prevail in the Christian church, this was foretold, and therefore we should not think worse of Christ's person, doctrine, or cross, when we see it fulfilled: See 1 Tim. iv. 1. and 2 Tim. iii. 1. and 2 Pet. iii. 3. Therefore we must not think it strange, but comfort ourselves with this, that (in the midst of all this hurly-burly) Christ will maintain his church, and make good his promise, that *the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*, Matt. xvi. 18.

Observe, 4. The more religion is ridiculed and persecuted, the faster hold we should take and keep of it; being forewarned, we should shew that we are forearmed; under such trials we should stand firm, and *not be so soon shaken in mind*, 2 Thess. ii. 2.

Ver. 19. These be they which separate, &c.] Observe, 1. Sensualists are the worst separatists; they separate themselves from God

and Christ, and his church, to the devil, world, and flesh, by their ungodly courses, and vicious practices; and that is a great deal worse than separation from any particular branch of the visible church, on account of opinions, or modes and circumstances of external government or worship; though many can patiently bear with the former, while they are plentifully, and almost perpetually railing at the latter; as if no sin were damnable, but what they are pleased to call schism.

Observe, 2. That *sensual men have not the Spirit*, viz. of God, and Christ, the Spirit of holiness, which whoever has not, is none of Christ's, does not belong to him, Rom. viii. 9.

Observe, 3. The worse others are, the better should we endeavour and approve ourselves to be; the more busy Satan and his instruments are to pervert others in judgment or practice, the more tenacious should we be of sound doctrine, and a good conversation, *holding fast the faithful word, as we have been (divinely) taught, haki-*

*ing the mystery of faith in a pure conscience*, Tit. i. 9. 1 Tim. iii. 9. Ver. 20. Building up, &c.] Observe, The way to hold fast our profession, is to hold on in it; having laid our foundation well in a sound faith, and a sincere, upright heart, we must build upon it, i. e. make farther progress continually; and we should take care with what materials we carry on our building, viz. gold, silver, precious stones, not wood, hay, stubble, 1 Cor. iii. 12. Right principles, and a regular conversation, will stand the test, even of the fiery trial; but whatever we mix of baser alloy, though we be in the main sincere, we shall suffer loss by it; and though our persons be saved, all that part of our work shall be consumed; and if we ourselves escape, it will be with great danger and difficulty, as from an house on fire on every side.

Praying in the holy Ghost.] Observe, 1. Prayer is the nurse of faith; the way to build up ourselves in our most holy faith, is to continue instant in prayer, Rom. xii. 12.

Observe, 2. Our prayers are then most likely to prevail when we pray in the holy Ghost, i. e. under his guidance and influence, according to the rule of his word, with faith, fervency, and constant, persevering importunity; this is praying in the holy Ghost, whether it be done by, or without a set, prescribed form.

Ver. 21. Keep yourselves, &c.] i. e. 1. Keep up the grace of love to God in its lively, vigorous actings and exercises in your souls. 2. Take heed of throwing yourselves out of the love of God to you, or its delightful, cheering, strengthening manifestations; keep yourselves in the way of God, if you would continue in his love.

Looking for the mercy, &c.] Observe, 1. Eternal life is to be looked for only through mercy; mercy is our only plea, not merit; or if merit, not our own but another's, who has merited for us what otherwise we could have laid no claim to, nor have entertained any well grounded hope of.

Observe, 2. It is said, not only through the mercy of God, as our Creator, but through the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, as Redeemer; all that come to heaven must come thither through our Lord Jesus Christ; for there is none other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved, but that of the Lord Jesus only, Acts iv. 12. compared with ver. 10.

Observe, 3. That a believing expectation of eternal life will arm us against the snares of sin, 2 Pet. iii. 14. a lively faith of the blessed hope will help us to mortify our cursed lusts.

Ver. 22, 23. And of some have compassion, &c.] Observe, 1. We ought to do all we can to rescue others out of the snare of the devil, that they may be saved from (or recovered, when entangled therein, out of) dangerous errors, or pernicious practices: We are not only (under God) our own keepers, but every man ought to be (as much as in him lies) his brother's keeper; none but a wicked Cain will contradict this, Gen. iv. 9. We must watch over one another, faithfully (yet prudently) reprove each other, set a good example to all about us.

And this must be done with compassion, making a difference. How is that? We must distinguish between the weak and the wilful.

1. Of some we must have compassion, treat them with all tenderness, restore them in the spirit of meekness, not be needlessly harsh and severe in our censures of them, and their actions, nor proud and haughty in our carriage towards them, not implacable, averle to reconciliation with them, or admitting them to the friendship they formerly had with us, when they give evident, or even strongly hopeful tokens of a sincere repentance; if God hath forgiven them, why should not we? we infinitely more need his forgiveness, than they do, or can do ours; though, perhaps, neither they nor we are justly or sufficiently sensible of this.

2. Others save with fear; ] Urging upon them the terrors of the Lord, endeavour to frighten them out of their sins; preach hell and damnation to them, so good Mr. Henry.

But what if prudence and caution in administering even the most just and severe reproofs be what is primarily and chiefly here intimated, (I do but offer it) q. d. fear lest you frustrate your own good intentions and honest designs, by rash and imprudent management, that you do not harden, instead of reclaiming, even where greater degrees of severity are requisite, than in the immediately foregoing instance; we are often apt to over-do, when we are sure we mean honestly, and think we are right in the main; yet the very worst are not needlessly, or rashly, or to extremity to be provoked; lest they be thereby farther hardened through our default.



*Hating even the garment, &c.] i. e. keeping yourselves at the utmost distance from what is, or appears evil, and designing and endeavouring that others may do so too; avoid, as Mr. Henry speaks, all that leads to sin, or that looks like sin, 1 Thess. v. 22.*

Lastly, The apostle concludes this epistle with solemn ascription of glory to the great God. Note, Whatever is the subject or argument we have been treating of, ascribing glory to God is fittest for us to conclude with, *ver. 24, 25.*

Note farther, God is able, and he is as willing as able, *to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory*; not as those who have never been faulty, for what has once been done, can never be rendered undone, even by Omnipotence itself, for that implies a contradiction, but as those whose faults shall not be imputed to their ruin, which, but for God's mercy, and a Saviour's merits, they might most justly have been.

*Before the presence of his glory.]* Observe, 1. That the glory of the Lord will shortly be present, we now look upon it as distant, and too many look upon it as uncertain, but it will come, and it will be manifest and apparent, *every eye shall see him, Rev. i. 7.* this is now the object of our faith, but hereafter, and sure it cannot now be long too, it will be the object of our sense; *whom we now*

*believe in, him we shall shortly see, to our unspeakable joy and comfort, or unexpressible terror and consternation, 1 Pet. i. 8.*

Observe, 2. That all real, sincere believers shall be presented at the Lord Redeemer's appearance and coming, by him their glorious Head, to the Father, in order to his approbation, acceptance, and reward; they were given him of the Father, and *of all that were so given him he has lost none*, nor will lose any one, not an individual, a single soul, but will present them all perfectly holy and happy, when he shall surrender his mediatorial kingdom *to his God, and our God; his Father, and our Father, John vi. 39. with chap. xvii. 12. 1 Cor. xv. 24.*

Observe, 3. When believers shall be *presented faultless*, it will be *with exceeding joy*. Alas! now our faults fill us with fears, doubts, and sorrows; but *be of good cheer*, if we are sincere, we shall be, our dear Redeemer has undertaken for it we shall be, *presented faultless*; where there is no sin, there will be no sorrow; where there is the perfection of holiness, there will be the perfection of joy: Surely, the God who can and will do all this, is worthy to have *glory, majesty, dominion and power* ascribed to him, *both now and forever!* And to this we may well, with the apostle, affix our hearty *Amen.*

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A N

E X P O S I T I O N

O F T H E

Revelation of St. *J O H N* the Divine, With Practical Observations.

It ought to be no prejudice to the credit and authority of this book that it has been rejected by men of corrupt minds, such as Cerdon and Marcion, and doubted of by men of a better character; for that has been the lot of other parts of holy writ, and of the divine author of the scripture himself: The image and superscription of this book is truly sacred and divine, the matter of it agreeable with other prophetic books, particularly Ezekiel and Daniel; the church of God has generally received it, and found good counsel and great comfort in it.

From the beginning the church of God has been blessed with prophecy, that glorious prediction of breaking the serpent's head, was the stay and support of the patriarchal age, and the many prophecies there were concerning the Messiah to come, were the gospel of the Old Testament; Christ himself prophesied of the destruction of Jerusalem, and, about the time in which that was accomplished, he entrusted the apostle John with this book of revelation, to deliver it to the church as a prediction of the most important events that should happen to it to the end of time, for the support of the faith of his people, and the direction of their hope; it is called the revelation, because God therein discovers those things which could never have been sifted out by the reasonings of human understanding; those deep things of God which no man knows, but the Spirit of God, and those to whom he reveals them.

C H A P. I.

This chapter is a general preface to the whole book, and contains,

1. *An inscription, declaring the original and the design of it, ver. 1, 2.*
2. *The apostolical benediction pronounced on all those that shall pay a due regard to the contents of this book, ver. 3,—8.*
3. *A glorious vision or appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ to the apostle John, when he delivered to him this revelation, from ver. 9. to the end of the chapter.*

1. **T**HE revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: 2. Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

Here we have, 1. What we may call the pedigree of this book.

1. It is *the revelation of Jesus Christ*; the whole bible is so; for all *revelation* comes through Christ, and all centers in him; and especially *in these last days God has spoken to us by his Son*, and concerning his Son: Christ, as the king of his church, has been pleased thus far to let his church know by what rules and methods he will proceed in his government; and, as the prophet of the church, he has made known to us the things that shall be hereafter.

2. It is a *revelation which God gave unto Christ*: Though Christ is himself God, and, as such, has light and life in himself, yet, as he sustains the office of *mediator between God and man*, he receives his instruction from the Father; the human nature of Christ, though endowed with the greatest sagacity, judgment, and penetration, yet could not, in a way of reason, discover these great events, which, not being produced by natural causes, but wholly depending upon the will of God, could only be the object of divine prescience, and must come to a created mind only by *revelation*. Our Lord Jesus is the great trustee of *divine revelation*; it is to him we owe the knowledge we have of what we are to expect from God, and what he expects from us.

3. This revelation Christ sent and signified by his angel. Observe here. The admirable order of *divine revelation*: God gave it to Christ, and Christ employed an angel to communicate it to the churches. The angels are God's messengers; they are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation; they are Christ's servants; principalities and powers are subject to him; all the angels of God are obliged to worship him.

4. The angel signified it to the apostle John; as the angels are the messengers of Christ, the ministers are the messengers of the churches; what they receive from heaven, they are to communicate to the churches. John was the apostle chosen for this service. Some think he was the only one surviving, the rest having sealed their testimony with their blood. This was to be the last book of *divine revelation*, and therefore notified to the church by the last of the

the apostles. John was the beloved disciple, he was under the New Testament, as the prophet Daniel under the Old; a man greatly beloved; he was the servant of Christ; he was an apostle, an evangelist, and a prophet; he served Christ in all the three extraordinary offices of the church. James was an apostle, but not a prophet, nor evangelist; Matthew was an apostle and evangelist, but not a prophet; Luke was an evangelist, but neither a prophet nor apostle; but John was all three; and so Christ calls him in an eminent sense his servant John.

5. John was to deliver this revelation to the church; to all his servants. For the revelation was not designed only for the use of Christ's extraordinary servants, the ministers; but for all his servants the members of the church; they have all a right to the oracles of God, and all have their concern in them.

2. Here we have the subject matter of this revelation, viz. the things that must shortly come to pass. The evangelists give us an account of the things that are past; prophecy gives us an account of things to come. These future events are shewed, and not in the clearest light in which God could have set them, but in such a light as he saw most proper, and which would best answer his wise and holy purposes. Had they been as clearly foretold in all their circumstances as God could have revealed them, the prediction might have prevented the accomplishment; but they are foretold more darkly, to beget in us a veneration for the scripture, and to engage our attention, and excite our inquiry; and we have in this revelation a general idea of the methods of divine providence and government in and about the church, and many good lessons may be learned hereby. These events (it is said) were such as should not only come to pass surely, but shortly; that is, they would begin to come to pass very shortly, and the whole would be accomplished in a short time. For now the last ages of the world were come.

4. Here is an attestation of the prophecy, ver. 2. It was signified to John, who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. It is observable that the historical books of the Old Testament have not always the name of the historian prefixed to them, as in the books of *Judges*, *Kings*, *Chronicles*; but in the prophetic books the name is always prefixed, as *Isaiah*, *Jeremiah*, &c. So in the New Testament, though John did not prefix his name to his first epistle, yet he does to this prophecy, as ready to vouch and answer for the truth of it, and he does not only give us his name but his office. He was one who bare record of the word of God in general, and of the testimony of Jesus in particular, and of all things that he saw; he was an eye-witness, and he concealed nothing that he saw. Nothing recorded in this revelation was his own invention or imagination; but all was the record of God, and the testimony of Jesus; and as he added nothing to it, so he kept back no part of the counsels of God.

3. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand.

4. **J**ohn to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne; 5. And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth: Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6. And hath made us kings and priests, unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 7. Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him: even so, Amen. 8. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

We have here an apostolical benediction on those that should give a due regard to this divine revelation; and this benediction is given more generally, and more especially.

1. More generally, to all that either read or hear the words of the prophecy. This blessing seems to be pronounced with a design to encourage us to study this book, and not be weary of looking into it upon the account of the obscurity of many things in it; it will repay the labour of the careful and attentive reader. Observe, 1. It is a blessed privilege to enjoy the oracles of God. This was one of the principal advantages the Jews had above the Gentiles. 2. It is a blessed thing to study the scriptures; they are well employed that search the scriptures. 3. It is a privilege not only to read the scriptures our selves, but to hear them read by others, who are qualified to give us the sense of what they read, and to lead us into an understanding of them. 4. It is not sufficient to our blessedness that we read and hear the scriptures, but we must keep the things that are written; we must keep them in our memories, in our minds, in our affections, and in practice, and we shall be blessed in the deed. 5. The nearer we come to the accomplishment of the scriptures, the greater regard we should give unto them. The time is at hand, and we should be so much the more attentive as we see the day approaching.

2. The apostolical benediction is pronounced more specially, and particularly to the seven Asian churches, ver. 4. These seven churches are named in, ver. 11. and distinct messages sent to each of them respectively in the chapters following. The apostolical blessing is more expressly directed to these, because they were nearest to him, who was now in the isle of Patmos, and, perhaps, he had the peculiar care of them, and superintendency over them, not excluding any of the rest of the apostles, if any of them were now living. Here observe,

1. What the blessing is which he pronounceth on all the faithful in these churches; grace and peace, holiness and comfort. Grace, that is, the good will of God towards us, and his good work in us, and peace, that is, the sweet evidence and assurance of this grace. There can be no true peace where there is not true grace; and where grace goes before, peace will follow.

2. From whence this blessing is to come. In whose name does the apostle bless the churches? Why, in the name of God, of the whole Trinity; for this is an act of adoration, and God only is the proper object of it; his ministers must bless the people in no name but his alone. And here,

1. The Father is first named: God the Father, which may be taken either essentially for God as God, or personally, for the first person in the ever blessed Trinity, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and he is described as the Jehovah which is, and which was, and which is to come, eternal, unchangeable, the same to the Old Testament church which was, and to the New Testament church, which is and will be the same to the church triumphant which is to come.

2. The holy Spirit, called the seven spirits, not seven in number, or in nature, but the infinite perfect Spirit of God, in whom there is a diversity of gifts and operations. He is before the throne; for as God made, so he governs all things by his Spirit.

3. The Lord Jesus Christ. He mentions him after the Spirit because he intended to enlarge more upon the person of Christ, as God manifested in the flesh, whom he had seen dwelling on earth before, and now saw again in a glorious form; and observe, the particular account we have here of Christ, ver. 5.

1. He is the faithful witness; he was from eternity a witness to all the counsels of God, *John xi. 18.* and he was in time a faithful witness to God's revealed will, who has now spoken to us by his Son, and upon his testimony we may safely depend, for he is a faithful witness, cannot be deceived, and cannot deceive us.

2. He is the first-begotten or first-born from the dead, or the first parent and head of the resurrection, the only one that raised himself by his own power, and who will by the same power raise up his people from their graves to everlasting honour. For he has begotten them again to a lively hope by his resurrection from the dead.

3. He is the prince of the kings of the earth from him they have their authority; by him their power is limited, and their wrath restrained; by him their counsels are over-ruled, and to him they are accountable. This is good news to the church, and it is good evidence of the Godhead of Christ, who is King of kings and Lord of Lords.

4. He is the great friend of his church and people; one that has done great things for them, and this out of pure disinterested affection; he has loved them, and in pursuance of that everlasting love he has, 1. Washed them from their sins in his own blood. Sins leave a stain upon the soul, a stain of guilt and of pollution; nothing can fetch out this stain but the blood of Christ, and rather than it should not be washed out, Christ was willing to shed his own blood to purchase pardon and purity for them. 2. He has made them kings and priests to God and his Father. Having justified and sanctified them, he makes them kings to his Father; that is, in his Father's account, and with his approbation, and for his glory. As kings they overcome the world, mortify sin, govern their own spirits, conquer Satan, hath power and prevalency with God in prayer, and shall judge the world. He hath made them priests, given them access to God, enabled them to enter into the holiest, and to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices; has given them an unction suitable to this character; and for these high honours and favours they are bound to ascribe to him dominion and glory for ever.

5. He will be the judge of the world, ver. 7. *Behold, he cometh, and every eye shall see him.* This book, the revelation, begins and ends with a prediction of the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We should set our selves to meditate frequently upon the second coming of Christ, and keep it in the eye of our faith and expectation. John speaks as if he saw that day, *behold, he cometh*; as sure as if you beheld him with your eyes. *He cometh with clouds*, which are his chariot and pavilion; he will come publicly, *every eye shall see him*; the eye of his people, the eye of his enemies, every eye, yours and mine. He shall come to the terror of those that pierced him, and have not repented; and of all that have wounded and crucified him afresh by their apostasy from him, and to the astonishment of the pagan world. For he comes to take vengeance on those that know not God, as well as on those that obey not the gospel of Christ.

6. This account of Christ is ratified and confirmed by himself, ver. 8. in which our Lord Jesus justly challenges the same honour and power that is ascribed to the Father, ver. 4. He is the beginning and

and the end, all things are from him and for him ; he is the Almighty ; he is the same eternal and unchangeable one. And surely whosoever presumes to blot out one character of this name of Christ, deserves to have his name blotted out of the book of life. They that honour him, he will honour ; but they that despise him shall be lightly esteemed.

9. I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. 10. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, 11. Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last : and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia ; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea. 12. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks ; 13. And in the midst of the seven candlesticks, one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle : 14. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow ; and his eyes were as a flame of fire ; 15. And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace ; and his voice as the sound of many waters. 16. And he had in his right hand seven stars : and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword : and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. 17. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead : and he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not ; I am the first and the last : 18. I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death. 19. Write these things which thou hast seen, and the things which are ; and the things which shall be hereafter. 20. The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches : and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest, are the seven churches.

We are now come to that glorious vision that the apostle had of the Lord Jesus Christ, when he came to deliver this revelation to him. Where observe,

1. The account given of the person who was favoured with this vision. And he describes himself,

1. By his present state and condition. He was the brother and companion of these churches in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Christ. He was at this time, as the rest of true Christians were, a persecuted man, banished, and perhaps imprisoned for his adherence to Christ. He was their brother, though an apostle ; he seems to value himself upon his relation to the church, rather than his authority in it. Judas may be an apostle, but not a brother in the family of God ; he was their companion. The children of God should chuse communion and society with each other ; he was their companion in tribulation. The persecuted servants of God do not suffer alone, the same trials are accomplished in others ; he was their companion in patience, not only a sharer with them in suffering circumstances, but in suffering graces. If we have the patience of the saints, we should not grudge to meet with their trials. He was their brother and companion in the patience of the kingdom of Christ, a sufferer for Christ's cause, for asserting his kingly power over the church and the world, and for adhering to it against all that would usurp upon it. By this account he gives of his present state, he acknowledges his engagements to sympathize with them, and to endeavour to give them counsel and comfort, and bespeaks their more careful attention to what he had to say to them from Christ their common Lord.

2. By the place where he was when he was favoured with this vision. He was in the isle Patmos ; he does not say who banished him thither ; it becomes Christians to speak sparingly and modestly of their own sufferings. Patmos is said to be an island in the Ægean sea, one of those called Cyclades, and was about 35 miles in compass ; but under this confinement it was the apostle's comfort that he did not suffer as an evil-doer, but it was for the testimony of Jesus, for bearing witness to Christ as the Immanuel, the Saviour. This was a cause worth suffering for ; and the Spirit of glory and of God rested upon this persecuted apostle.

3. The day and time in which he had this vision. It was the Lord's day ; the day which Christ had separated and set apart for himself, as the eucharist is called the Lord's Supper. Surely this can be no other than the Christian sabbath ; the first day of the week to be observed in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ. Let us who call him our Lord, honour him on his own day ; the day which the Lord hath made, and in which we ought to rejoice.

4. The frame that his soul was in at this time. He was in the Spirit ; he was not only in a rapture when he received the vision, but before he received it, he was in a serious, heavenly, spiritual frame under the blessed gracious influences of the Spirit of God. God usually prepares the souls of his people for uncommon manifestations of himself, by the quickening, sanctifying influences of his good Spirit. Those that would enjoy communion with God on the Lord's day, must endeavour to abstract their thoughts and affections from flesh and fleshly things, and be wholly taken up with things of a spiritual nature.

2. The apostle gives an account of what he heard when thus in the Spirit. An alarm was given as with the sound of a trumpet, and then he heard a voice, the voice of Christ applying to himself the character before given, *the first and the last*, and commanding the apostle to commit to writing the things that were now to be revealed to him, and to send it immediately to the seven Asian churches, whose names are mentioned. Thus our Lord Jesus, the captain of salvation, gave the apostle notice of his glorious appearance as with the sound of a trumpet.

3. We have now an account of what he saw ; he turned to see the voice, whose it was, and whence it came ; and then a wonderful scene of vision opened itself to him.

1. He saw a representation of the church under the emblem of seven golden candlesticks, as it is explained in the last verse of the chapter ; the churches are compared to candlesticks, because they hold forth the light of the gospel to advantage ; the churches are not candles, Christ only is our light, and his gospel our lamp, but they receive their light from Christ and the gospel, and hold it forth to others ; they are golden candlesticks, for they should be precious and pure, comparable to fine gold ; not only the ministers, but the members of the churches ought to be such ; their light should so shine before men, as to engage others to give glory to God.

2. He saw a representation of the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of the golden candlesticks ; for he has promised to be with his churches always to the end of the world, filling them with light, and life, and love, for he is the very animating, informing soul of the church. And here we observe.

1. The glorious form in which Christ appeared in several particulars. 1. He was clothed with a garment down to the foot, a princely and priestly robe denoting righteousness and honour. 2. He was girt about with a golden girdle, the breast-plate of the high priest, on which the names of his people are engraven ; he was ready girt to do all the work of a redeemer. 3. His head and hairs were white like wool or snow ; he was the ancient of days ; his hoary head was no sign of decay, but it was indeed a crown of glory. 4. His eyes were as a flame of fire, piercing and penetrating into the very hearts and reins of men, scattering terrors among his adversaries. 5. His feet were like unto fine burning brass, strong and steadfast, supporting his own interest, and subduing his enemies, and treading them to powder. 6. His voice was as the sound of many waters, of many rivers falling in together. He can and will make himself heard to those that are afar off, as well as to those that are near. His gospel is a profusent and mighty stream fed by the upper springs of infinite wisdom and knowledge. 7. He had in his right hand seven stars, that is, the ministers of the churches, who are under his direction, have all the light and influence from him, and are secured and preserved by him. 8. Out of his mouth went a two-edged sword, his word which both wounds and heals, strikes at sins on the right hand and on the left. 9. His countenance was as the sun shining, its strength too bright and dazzling for mortal eyes to behold.

2. The impression this appearance of Christ made upon the apostle John, ver. 17. He fell at the feet of Christ as dead, he was overpowered with the greatness of that lustre and glory in which Christ appeared, though he had been so familiar with him before. How well is it for us, that God speaks to us by men like our selves, whose terrors shall not make us afraid, for none can see the face of God and live !

3. The condescending goodness of the Lord Jesus to his disciples, ver. 17. he laid his hand upon him, he raised him up, he did not plead against him with his great power, but he put strength into him, he spoke kind words to him. 1. Words of comfort and encouragement ; fear not. He commanded away the slavish fears of his disciples. 2. Words of instruction ; telling him particularly who he was that thus appeared to him. And here he acquaints him, 1. With his divine nature, *the first and the last*. 2. With his former sufferings, *I was dead* ; the very same that his disciples saw upon the cross dying for the sins of men. 3. With his resurrection and life ; *I live and am alive for evermore*, have conquered death and open the grave, and am partakes of an endless life. 4. With his office and authority ; *I have the keys of hell and of death*, a sovereign dominion in and over the invisible world, opening and none can shut, shutting so as that none can open ; opening the gates of death when he pleases, and the gates of eternal world, of happiness or misery, as the Judge of all, from whose sentence there lies no appeal. 5. With his will and pleasure, *that John should write, both the things he had seen, and the things that are, and that should be hereafter*. 6. With the meaning of the seven stars that they are the ministers of the churches ; and of the seven candlesticks, that they are the seven churches, to whom Christ would now send by him particular and proper messages.

CHAP. II.

The apostle John having in the foregoing chapter written the things which he had seen, now proceeds to write the things that are according to the command of God, chap. i. 19. i. e. the present state of the seven churches of Asia, with which he had a particular acquaintance, and for which he had a tender concern. He was directed to write to every one of them according to their present state and circumstances, and to inscribe every letter to the angel of that church, to the minister or rather ministry of that church, called angels, because they are the messengers of God to mankind. In this chapter we have, 1. The message sent to Ephesus, from ver. 1,—8. To Smyrna, from ver. 8,—12. 3. To Pergamus, from ver. 12,—18. 4. To Thyatira, from ver. 18. to the end.

1. **U**NTO the angel of the church of Ephesus, write, These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; 2. I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not; and hast found them liars: 3. And hast born, and hast patience, and for my names sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. 4. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 5. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. 6. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. 7. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

We have here, 1. The inspiration, where observe,

1. To whom the first of these epistles is directed. To the church of Ephesus, a famous church planted by the apostle Paul, Acts xix. and after that watered and governed by St. John. who had his residence very much there. We can hardly think that Timothy was the angel or sole pastor and bishop of this church at this time, that he who was of a very excellent spirit, and naturally cared for the good state of the souls of the people, should become so remiss as to deserve the rebukes given to the ministry of this church. Observe,

2. From whence this epistle to Ephesus was sent. And here we have one of those titles that were given to Christ in his appearance to John in the chapter foregoing, viz. *He that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, and walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks*, chap. i. 13, 16. This title consists of two parts:

1. *He that holds the stars in his right hand*: The ministers of Christ are under his special care and protection. It is the honour of God that he knows the number of the stars, calls them by their names, binds the sweet influences of Pleiades, and looses the bands of Orion; and it is the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ, that the ministers of the gospel, who are greater blessings to the church, than the stars are to the world, are in his hand; he directs all their motions, he disposes of them into their several orbs, he fills them with light and influence, he supports them, or else they would soon be falling stars; they are instruments in his hand, and all the good they do is done by his hand with them.

2. *He walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks*. This speaks his relation to his churches, as the other his relation to his ministers. Christ is in an intimate manner present and conversant with his churches, he knows and observes their state, he takes pleasure in them as a man does to walk in his garden; though Christ be in heaven, he walks in the midst of his churches on earth, observing what is amiss in them, and what it is they want; and this is a great encouragement to those that have the care of the churches, that the Lord Jesus has graven them upon the palms of their hands.

2. The contents of the epistle, in which, as in most of those that follow, we have,

1. The commendation Christ gave this church, ministers and members, which he always brings in, by declaring that he knows their works, and therefore both his commendation and rephension are to be strictly regarded; for he does not in either speak at a venture, he knows what he says. Now the church of Ephesus is commended,

1. For their diligence in duty, ver. 2. *I know thy works, and thy labour*. This may more immediately relate to the ministry of this church, which had been laborious and diligent. Dignity calls for duty. Those that are stars in Christ's hand, had need to be always in motion, dispensing light to all about them. *For my name's sake thou hast laboured and hast not fainted*, ver. 3. Christ keeps an account of every day's work, and every hour's work his servants do for him, and their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

2. For their patience in suffering, ver. 2. *Thy labour and thy patience*. It is not enough that we be diligent; but we must be patient, and endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ. Ministers must

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have and exercise great patience, and no Christian can be without it. There must be bearing patience to endure the injuries of men and the rebukes of providence, and there must be waiting patience, that when they have done the will of God, they may receive the promise: *Thou hast born, and hast patience*, ver. 3. We shall meet with such difficulties in our way, and work, as requires patience to go on and finish well.

3. For their zeal against what was evil, ver. 2. *Thou canst not bear them that are evil*. Where observe, it consists very well with Christian patience not to dispense with sin, much less allow it; though we must shew all meekness to men, yet ye must shew a just zeal against their sins. This their zeal was the more to be commended, because it was according to knowledge, discreet zeal upon a previous trial made, of the pretences, practices and tenets of evil men. *Thou hast tried them that say they are apostles, and are not; and hast found them liars*. True zeal proceeds with discretion; none should be cast off till they be tried. Some were risen up in this church that pretended to be not ordinary ministers, but apostles; their pretensions had been examined, and found to be vain and false; those that impartially search after truth, may come to the knowledge of it.

2. The rebuke given to this church, ver. 4. *Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee*. Those that have much good in them, may have something much amiss in them; and our Lord Jesus as an impartial master and judge takes notice of both; though he first observes what is good, and is most ready to mention that, yet he also observes what is amiss, and will faithfully reprove them for it. The sin that Christ charged this church with, is their decay and declension in holy love and zeal. *Thou hast left thy first love*; not left and forsaken the object of it, but lost the fervent degree of it that at first appeared.

Observe, 1. The first affections of men towards Christ, and holiness, and heaven, are usually lively and warm. God remembered the love of Israel's espousals when she should follow him whithersoever he went. 2. These lively affections will abate and cool, if great care be not taken, and diligence used, to preserve them in constant exercise. 3. That Christ is grieved and displeased with his people when he sees them grow remiss and cold towards him, and he will one way or other make them sensible that he does not take it well from them.

3. The advice and counsel given them from Christ, ver. 5. *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, &c.*

1. *Those that have lost their first love, must remember from whence they are fallen*; they must compare their present with their former state, and consider how much better it was with them then than now; how much peace, strength, purity and pleasure they have lost, by leaving their first love; how much more comfortably they could lie down and sleep at night; how much more cheerfully they could awake in the morning; how much better they could bear afflictions, and how much more becomingly they could enjoy the favours of providence; how much easier the thoughts of death were to them, and how much stronger their desires and hopes of heaven. 2. They must repent, they must be inwardly grieved and ashamed for their sinful declining; they must blame themselves, and shame themselves for it, and humbly confess it in the sight of God, and judge and condemn themselves for it. 3. They must return and do their first work; they must as it were begin again, go back step by step, till they come to the place where they took the first false step; they must endeavour to revive and recover their first zeal, tenderness and seriousness, and must pray as earnestly, and watch as diligently as they did when they first set out in the ways of God. Now this good advice is forced and urged, 1. By a severe threatening if it should be neglected. *I will come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of its place*. If the presence of Christ's grace and Spirit be blighted we may expect the presence of his displeasure; he will come in a way of judgment, and that suddenly and surprizingly upon impenitent churches and sinners, he will unchurch them, take away his gospel, his ministers, and his ordinances from them; and what will the churches, or the angels of the churches do when the gospel is removed?

2. By an encouraging mention that is made of what was yet good among them, ver. 6. *This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate*. Though thou hast declined in thy love to what is good, yet thou retainest thy hatred to what is evil, especially to what is grossly so. The Nicolaitans were a loose sect, that sheltered themselves under the name of Christianity; they held hateful doctrines, and they were guilty of hateful deeds, hateful to Christ, and to all true Christians; and it is mentioned to the praise of the church of Ephesus, that they had a just zeal and abhorrence of those wicked doctrines and practices. An indifference of spirit, between truth and error, good and evil, may be called charity and meekness, but it is not pleasing unto Christ. Our Saviour subjoins this kind commendation to his severe threatening, to make the advice more effectual.

3. We have the conclusion of this epistle, in which, as in those that follow, we have, 1. A call to attention; *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*.

Observe, 1. What is written in the scriptures is spoken by the Spirit of God. 2. What is said to one church concerns all the churches, in every place and age. 3. We can never employ our faculty of hearing better than in hearkening to the word of God, and

we deserve to lose it, if we do not employ it to this purpose; and they that will not hear the call of God now, will wish at length they had never had a capacity of hearing any thing at all. 2. A promise of great mercy to those that overcome. The Christian life is a warfare against sin, Satan, the world, and the flesh. It is not enough that we engage in this warfare, but we must pursue it to the end; we must never yield to our spiritual enemies, but fight the good fight, till we gain the victory, as all persevering Christians shall do, and the warfare and victory shall have a glorious triumph and reward. That which is here promised is to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God. They shall have that perfection of holiness, and that confirmation therein that Adam should have had; if he had gone well through the course of his trial, then he should have eaten of the tree of life that was in the midst of paradise, and that would have been the sacrament of confirmation to him in his holy and happy state. So all that persevere in their Christian trial and warfare, shall derive from Christ as the tree of life, perfection and confirmation in holiness and happiness in the paradise of God; not in the earthly paradise, but the heavenly, *chap. xxii. 1, 2.*

8. And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna, write, These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive. 9. I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and art not, but are the synagogue of Satan. 10. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. 11. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death.

We now proceed to the second epistle sent to another of the Asian churches, where, as before, observe,

1. The preface or inscription in both parts.

1. The superscription, telling us to whom it was more expressly and immediately directed. *To the angel of the church in Smyrna*, a place well known at this day by our merchants, a city of great trade and wealth, perhaps the only city of all the seven that is still known by the same name, but now no longer a Christian church, but overrun with Mahometanism.

2. The subscription, containing another of the glorious titles of our Lord Jesus, *the first and the last, he that was dead, and is alive*, taken out of *chap. i. 17, 18.* 1. Jesus is the first and the last. It is but a little scantling of time that is allowed to us in this world, but our redeemer is *the first and the last.* He is the first, for by him all things were made; and he was before all things, with God, and was God himself. He is the last, for all things are made for him, and he will be the judge of all. This surely is the title of God from everlasting and to everlasting, and it is the title of one that is an unchangeable mediator between God and man, Jesus, the same yesterday, to day and for ever. He was the first, for by him the foundation of the church was laid in the patriarchal state. And he is the last, for by him the top-stone will be brought forth and laid in the end of time. 2. He was dead, and is alive. He was dead, and died for our sins. He is alive, for he rose again for our justification, and he ever lives to make intercession for us. He was dead, and by dying purchased salvation for us; he is alive, and by his life applies this salvation to us. And if when we were enemies we are reconciled by his death, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. His death we commemorate every sacrament-day, his resurrection and life every sabbath-day.

2. The subject matter of this epistle to Smyrna, where after the common declaration of Christ's omniscience, and that perfect cognizance he has of all the works of men, and especially of his churches, he takes notice,

1. Of the improvement they had made in their spiritual state. This comes in, in a short parenthesis, but it is very emphatical; *but thou art rich*, ver. 9. Poor in temporals, but rich in spirituals; poor in spirit, and yet rich in grace; their spiritual riches are set off by their outward poverty. Many that are rich in temporals, are poor in spirituals. Thus it was with the church of Laodicea. Some that are poor outwardly, are inwardly rich; rich in faith, in good works, rich in privileges, rich in bonds and deeds of gift, rich in hope, rich in reversion. Spiritual riches are usually the reward of great diligence; the diligent hand makes rich. Where there is spiritual plenty, outward poverty may be better born; and when God's people are impoverished in temporals for the sake of Christ and a good conscience, he uses to make all up to them in spiritual riches, which are much more satisfying and enduring.

2. Of their sufferings. *I know thy tribulation and thy poverty.* The persecution they underwent, even to the spoiling of their goods. They that will be faithful to Christ, must expect to go through many tribulations, but Jesus Christ takes particular notice of all their troubles; in all their afflictions he is afflicted, and he will recompense tribulation to those that trouble them, but to them that are troubled rest with himself.

3. He knows the wickedness and the falsehood of their enemies. *I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, but are not;*

and that is, 1. Of those that pretend to be the only peculiar covenant people of God, as the Jews boasted themselves to be, even after God had rejected them: Or, 2. Of those that would be setting up the Jewish rites and ceremonies, that were now not only antiquated, but abrogated; these may say, they only are the church of God in the world, when, indeed, *they are the synagogue of Satan.* Observe, 1. That as Christ has a church in the world, the spiritual Israel of God, so the devil has his *synagogue*; those assemblies that are set up in opposition to the truths of the gospel, and that promote and propagate damnable errors, those that are set up in opposition to the purity and spirituality of gospel worship, and promote and propagate the vain inventions of men, and rites and ceremonies which never entered into the thoughts of God, and those assemblies which are set up to revile and persecute the true worship and worshippers of God, these are all *synagogues of Satan*, he presides over them, he works in them, his interests are served by them, and he receives an horrid homage and honour from them. 2. For *the synagogues of Satan* to give themselves out to be the church or Israel of God, is no less than *blasphemy*; God is greatly dishonoured when his name is made use of to promote and patronize the interests of Satan, and he has an high resentment of this *blasphemy*, and will take a just revenge on those that persist in it.

4. He foreknows the future trials of his people, and forewarns them of them, and forearms them against them. 1. He forewarns them of future trials. ver. 10. *The devil shall cast some of you into prison, and you shall have tribulation.* The people of God must look for a series and succession of troubles in this world, and their troubles usually rise higher, they had been impoverished by their *tribulations* before, now they must be imprisoned. Observe, It is the devil that stirs up his instruments, wicked men, to persecute the people of God; tyrants and persecutors are the devil's tools, though they gratify their own sinful malignity, and know not that they are acted by a diabolical malice. 2. Christ forearms them against these approaching troubles: (1.) By his counsel, *fear none of these things*; this is not only a word of command, but of efficacy, not only forbidding slavish fear, but subduing it, and furnishing the soul with strength and courage. (2.) By shewing them how their sufferings would be alleviated and limited. 1. They should not be universal; it would be *some of them*, not all, that should be *cast into prison*; those that were best able to bear it, and might expect to be visited and comforted by the rest. 2. They were not to be perpetual, but for a set time, and a short time, *ten days*; it should not be everlasting *tribulation*, *the time should be shortened for the elects sake.* 3. It should be to try them, not to destroy them; that their faith, and patience, and courage might be proved and improved, and be found to honour and glory. (3.) By proposing and promising a glorious reward to their fidelity, ver. 10. *Be thou faithful to death, and I will give thee a crown of life.*

Observe, 1. The sureness of the reward, *I will give thee*; he hath said it that is able to do it, and he has undertaken that he will do it; they shall have the reward from his own hand, and none of their enemies shall be able to wrest it out of his hand, or to pull it from their heads.

2. The suitableness of it; 1. *A crown* to reward their poverty, and their fidelity, and their conflict. 2. *A crown of life* to reward those that are *faithful even unto death*, are *faithful* till they die, and that part with life itself in fidelity to Christ; that life so worn out in his service, or laid down in his cause, shall be rewarded with another, and a much better life, that shall be eternal.

3. The conclusion of this message, and that, as before, 1. With a call to universal attention, that all men, all the world should hear what passes between Christ and his churches, how he commends them, how he comforts them, how he reproves their failures, how he rewards their fidelity; it concerns all the inhabitants of the world to observe God's dealing with his own people, all the world may learn instruction and wisdom thereby. 2. With a gracious promise to the conquering Christian, ver. 11. *He that overcometh, shall not be hurt of the second death.* Observe, 1. That there is not only a first, but a *second death*; a death after the body is dead. 2. This *second death* is unspeakably worse than the first death, both in the dying pangs and agonies of it, which are the agonies of the soul, without any mixture of support, and in the duration, it is *eternal death*, dying *the death*, to die, and to be always dying; this is hurtful indeed, it is fatally hurtful to all that fall under it. 3. From this hurtful, this destructive death, Christ will save all his faithful servants; *the second death* shall have no power over those that are *partakers of the first resurrection*; *the first death* shall not hurt them, and *the second death* shall have no power over them.

12. And to the angel of the church in Pergamos, write, These things saith he, which hath the sharp sword with two edges, 13. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, *even where Satans seat is*: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. 14. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed

crificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. 15. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. 16. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. 17. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.

Here also we are to consider, (1.) The inscription of this message. 1. Who it was sent to: *To the angel of the church of Pergamos.* Whether this was a city raised up out of the ruins of old Troy, a Troy novant, as our London was once called, or some other city of the same name, is neither certain nor material; it was a place where Christ had called and constituted a gospel church by the preaching of the gospel, and the grace of his Spirit making the word effectual. 2. Who it was that sent this message to Pergamos, the same Jesus who here describes himself as one that *hath the sharp sword with two edges*, chap. i. 18. *out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword.*

Some have observed, that, in the several titles of Christ, which are prefixed to the several epistles, there is something suited to the state of those churches; as in that to Ephesus, what could be more proper to awaken and recover a drowsy and declining church, than to hear Christ speaking as one that *held the stars in his hand*, and *walked in the midst of the golden candlesticks*? &c.

The church of Pergamos was infested with men of corrupt minds, that did what they could to corrupt both the faith and manners of the church, and Christ being resolved to fight against them by the sword of his word, takes the title of him that *hath the sharp sword with two edges*. 1. The word of God is a sword, it is a weapon both offensive and defensive, it is in the hand of God able to slay both sin and sinners. 2. It is a sharp sword, no heart so hard but it is able to wound it, no knot so closely tied but it is able to cut it; it can divide asunder between the soul and the spirit, that is, between the soul and those sinful habits, that, by custom, are become another soul, or seem to be essential to it. 3. It is a *sword with two edges*, it turns and cuts every way; there is the *edge* of the law against the transgressors of that dispensation, and the *edge* of the gospel against the despisers of that dispensation; there is an *edge* to make a wound, and an *edge* to open a festered wound in order to its healing; there is no escaping the *edge* of this sword; if ye turn aside to the right hand, it has an *edge* on that side; if on the left hand, you fall upon the *edge* of the sword on that side; it turns every way.

(2.) From the inscription we proceed to the contents of this epistle, in which the method is much the same that is observed in the rest. Here,

1. Christ takes notice of the trials and difficulties this church encountered with, *ver. 13. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest*, &c. The works of God's servants are best known, when their circumstances, under which they did those works, are duly considered; now that circumstance which added very much lustre to the good works of this church, was the circumstance of the place where this church was planted, a place *where Satan's seat* was; as our great Lord takes notice of all the advantages and opportunities we have for duty by the places where we dwell, so he takes notice of all the temptations and discouragements we meet with from the places *where we dwell*, and makes gracious allowances for them; this people *dwelt where Satan's seat* was, where he kept his court, his circuit is throughout the world, his *seat* is in some places that are infamous for wickedness, error, and cruelty; some think, the Roman governor in this city was a most violent enemy to the Christians, and the seat of persecution is *Satan's seat*.

2. He commends their steadfastness, *ver. 13. Thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith.* These two expressions are much of the same sense, it may be the former may signify the effect, and the latter the cause or means. 1. *Thou holdest fast my name*, thou art not ashamed of thy relation to me, but accountest it thine honour that *my name* is named on thee, that, as the wife bears the name of the husband, so thou art called by *my name*; this *thou holdest fast*, as thine honour and privilege. 2. That which has made thee thus faithful, is the grace of *faith*; *thou hast not denied* the great doctrines of the gospel, nor departed from the Christian faith, and by that means thou hast been kept faithful; and, indeed, our *faith* will have a great influence upon our faithfulness; men that *deny the faith of Christ*, may boast very much of their sincerity and faithfulness to God and conscience; but it has been seldom known that those who let go the true faith retain their fidelity; usually on that rock on which men make shipwreck of their faith, they make shipwreck of a good conscience too; and here our blessed Lord aggrandizes the fidelity of this church from the circumstance of the times, as well as of the place where they lived; they had been steadfast *even in those days wherein Antipas his faithful martyr was slain among them*; who this person was, and whether there be any thing mysterious in his name, we have no certain account; he was a faithful disciple of Christ, he suffered martyrdom for it, and sealed his faith and fidelity with his blood in the place *where Sa-*

tan dwelt; and though the rest of the believers there knew this and saw it, yet they were not discouraged nor drawn away from their steadfastness; this is mentioned as an addition to their honour.

3. He reproves them for their sinful failures, *ver. 14. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, &c. and them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.* There were some that taught it was lawful to eat things sacrificed to idols, and that simple fornication was no sin; they, by an impure worship, drew men into impure practices, as Balaam did the Israelites. Observe, 1. *The filthiness of the spirit*, and *the filthiness of the flesh*, often go together; corrupt doctrines, and a corrupt worship, often lead to a corrupt conversation. 2. That it is very lawful to fix the name of the leaders of any heresy upon those that follow them, it is the shortest way of telling who we mean. 3. That to continue in communion with persons of corrupt principles and practices, is displeasing to God, draws a guilt and blemish upon the whole society; they become *partakers of other mens sins*; though the church, as such, has no power to punish the persons of men, either for heresy or immorality, with corporal penalties; yet they have power to exclude them from their holy communion; and if they do not so, Christ, the head and law-giver of the church, will be displeased with them.

4. He calls them to repentance, *ver. 16. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly*, &c. Observe here, 1. Repentance is the duty of saints as well as sinners; it is a gospel duty. 2. It is the duty of churches and communities, as well as particular persons; they that sin together, should repent together. 3. It is the duty of Christian societies to *repent of other mens sins*, as far as they have been accessory to them, though but so much as by connivance. 4. When God comes to punish the corrupt members of a church, he rebukes that church itself for allowing such to continue in its communion, and some drops of the storm fall upon the whole society. 5. That no sword cuts so deep, nor inflicts so mortal a wound, as the sword of Christ's mouth; let but the threatnings of the word be set home upon the conscience of a sinner, and he will soon be a terror to himself; and let these threatnings be executed, and the sinner is utterly cut off; the word of God will take hold of sinners sooner or later, either for their conviction or confusion.

(3.) We have the conclusion of this epistle, where, after the usual demand of universal attention, there is the promise of great favour to those that overcome, *ver. 17. They shall eat of the hidden manna, and have the new name, and the white stone, which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it.* 1. *The hidden manna*, the influences and comforts of the Spirit of Christ in communion with him, coming down from heaven into the soul, from time to time, for his support, to let him taste something how saints and angels live in heaven; this is *hidden* from the rest of the world; *a stranger intermeddles not with this joy*; and it is laid up in Christ, the ark of the covenant, in the holy of holies. 2. *The white stone*, with a *new name* engraven upon it; this *white stone* is absolution from the guilt of sin, alluding to the ancient custom of giving a *white stone* to those acquitted on trial, and a *black stone* to those condemned; *the new name* is the name of adoption; adopted persons took the name of the family into which they were adopted; none can read the evidence of a man's adoption but himself; he cannot always read it; but, if he persevere, he shall have both the evidence of sonship, and the inheritance.

18. And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira, write, These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like nine brags; 19. I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. 20. Notwithstanding, I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. 21. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she repented not. 22. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. 23. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. 24. But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, As many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak, I will put upon you none other burden. 25. But that which ye have already, hold fast till I come. 26. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: 27. (And he shall rule them with a rod of iron: as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers) even as I received of my Father. 28. And I will give him the morning star. 29. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The form of each epistle is very much the same, and in this, as the

the rest, we have to consider the inscription, contents, and conclusion.

(1.) The inscription telling us,

1. To whom it is directed, *to the angel of the church of Thyatira*, a city of the proconsular Asia, bordering upon Mysia on the north, and Lydia on the south, a town of trade; from whence came the woman named *Lydia*, a *seller of purple*, who being at Philippi in Macedonia, probably, about the business of her calling, *heard Paul preach there*, and *God opened her heart*, that she attended to the things that were spoken, and believed, and was baptized, and entertained Paul and Silas there; whether it was by her means that the gospel was brought into her own city Thyatira is not certain, but that it was there, and successful to the forming a gospel church, this epistle assures us.

2. By whom it was sent, by *the Son of God*, who is here described as having *eyes like a flame of fire*, and *feet like as fine brass*; his general title is here *the Son of God*, that is, *the eternal and only begotten Son of God*, which denotes that he has *the same nature with the Father*, but with a distinct and subordinate manner of subsistence: The description we have here of him is in two characters: 1. That *his eyes are like unto a flame of fire*, signifying his piercing, penetrating, perfect knowledge, a thorough insight into all persons, and all things; *one who searches the hearts, and tries the reins of the children of men*, ver. 23. and will make all the churches to know he does so. 2. That *his feet are like fine brass*, that the outgoings of his providence are steady, awful, and all pure and holy; as he judges with perfect wisdom, so he acts with perfect strength and steadiness.

(2.) The contents, or subject matter of this epistle, which, as the rest, includes,

1. The honourable character and commendation Christ gives of this church, ministry, and people; and this given by one who was no stranger to them, but well acquainted with them, and with the principles from which they acted: Now in this church Christ makes honourable mention, 1. Of their *charity*, either more general, a disposition to do good to all men, or more special, to the household of faith; there is no religion where there is no charity. 2. Their *service*, their ministrations; this respects chiefly the officers of the church, who had *laboured in the word and doctrine*. 3. Their *faith*, which was the grace that actuated all the rest, both their charity, and their service. 4. Their *patience*; for those that are most charitable to others, most diligent in their places, and most faithful, must yet expect to meet with that which will exercise their patience. 5. Their growing fruitfulness; their *last works* were better than the first; this is an excellent character, when others had left their first love, and lost their first zeal, these were growing wiser and better; it should be the ambition and earnest desire of all Christians, that their last works may be their best works, that they may be better and better every day, and best at last.

2. A faithful reproof for what was amiss; and this is not so directly charged upon the church itself, as upon some wicked seducers that were among them; the church's fault was, that she connived too much at them; these wicked seducers are compared to Jezebel, and called by her name; Jezebel was a persecutor of the prophets of the Lord, and a great patroness of idolaters, and false prophets; the sin of these seducers was, they attempted to draw the servants of God into fornication, and to offer sacrifices to idols; they called themselves prophets, and so would claim a superior authority and regard to the ministers of that church: Two things aggravated the sin of these seducers, who being one in their spirit and design, are spoken of as one person: 1. They made use of the name of God to oppose the truth of his doctrine and worship, this very much aggravated their sin. 2. They abused the patience of God to harden themselves in their wickedness; God gave them space for repentance, but they repented not. Observe, 1. Repentance is necessary to prevent the sinner's ruin. 2. Repentance requires time, a course of time, and time convenient; it is a great work, and a work of time. 3. Where God gives space for repentance, he expects fruits meet for repentance. 4. Where the space for repentance is lost, the sinner perishes with a double destruction.

Now why should the wickedness of this Jezebel be charged upon the church of Thyatira? Why, because that church suffered her to seduce the people of that city. But how could they help it? they had not, as a church, civil power to banish or imprison her; but they had ministerial power to censure and to excommunicate her; and it is probable, that neglecting to use the power they had, made them sharers in her sin.

2. The punishment of this seducer, this Jezebel, ver. 22, 23. in which is couched a prediction of the fall of Babylon: 1. *I will cast her into a bed, into a bed of pain*, not of pleasure, *into a bed of flames*, and they that have sinned with her shall suffer with her; but this may yet be prevented by their repentance.

2. *I will kill her children with death*, that is, *the second death*, which does the work effectually, and leaves no hope of future life, no resurrection for those that are killed by the second death, but only to shame, and everlasting contempt.

3. The design of Christ in the destruction of these wicked seducers, and that was the instruction of others, especially of his churches: *All the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth the reins and the hearts; and I will give to every one of you according to your works.*

God is known by the judgments that he executeth; and, by this revenge taken upon seducers, he would make known, 1. His infallible knowledge of the hearts of men, of their principles, designs, frame, and temper; their formality, their indifference, their secret inclinations to symbolize with idolaters. 2. His impartial justice, in giving every one according to his work, that the name of Christians should be no protection, their churches should be no sanctuaries for sin and sinners.

4. The encouragement given to those that kept themselves pure and undefiled, ver. 24. *But to you I say, and to the rest, &c.* Observe, 1. What these seducers called their doctrines, depths, profound mysteries, amusing the people, and endeavouring to persuade them that they had a deeper insight into religion, than their own ministers had attained to. 2. What Christ called them, *depths of Satan*, satanical delusions and devices, diabolical mysteries; for there is a mystery of iniquity, as well as the great mystery of godliness; it is a dangerous thing to despise the mystery of God, and it is as dangerous to receive the mysteries of Satan. 3. How tender Christ is of his faithful servants, ver. 25. *I will lay upon you no other burthen; but that which you have already, hold fast till I come*: I will not overburden your faith with any new mysteries, nor your consciences with any new laws; I only require your attention to what you have received; hold that fast till I come, and I desire no more; Christ is coming to put an end to all the temptations of his people; and if they hold fast faith and a good conscience till he comes, all the difficulty and danger is over.

(3.) We now come to the conclusion of this message, ver. 26, 27, 28, 29. where you have, (1.) The promise of an ample reward to the persevering, victorious believer, in two parts: 1. Very great power and dominion over the rest of the world; *power over the nations*; which may refer either to the time when the empire should turn Christian, and the world be under the government of the Christian emperor, as in Constantine's time, or to the other world, when believers shall sit down with Christ on his throne of judgment, and join with him in trying, and condemning, and consigning over to punishment the enemies of Christ, and the church: *The upright shall have dominion in the morning*. 2. Knowledge and wisdom, suitable to such power and dominion; *I will give him the morning-star*: Christ is the morning-star, he brings day with him into the soul, the light of grace and of glory; and he will give his people that perfection of light and wisdom, that is requisite to that state of dignity and dominion that they shall have in the morning of the resurrection. (2.) This epistle ends with the usual demand of attention: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*. In the foregoing epistles, this demand of attention comes before the concluding promise; but in this, and all that follow, it comes after; and tells us, that we should all attend to the promises, as well as to the precepts that Christ delivers to the churches.

C H A P. III.

Here we have three more of the epistles of Christ to the churches.

1. To Sardis, ver. 1,—7.
2. To Philadelphia, ver. 7,—14.
3. To Laodicea, ver. 14. to the end of the chapter.

1. **A**ND unto the angel of the church in Sardis, write, These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. 2. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. 3. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. 4. Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. 5. He that overcome, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. 6. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Here, 1. The preface, shewing, (1.) To whom this letter is directed, *to the angel of the church of Sardis*, an ancient city of Lydia, on the banks of the mountain Tmolus, said to have been the chief city of Asia the less, and the first city in that part of the world that was converted by the preaching of St. John; and, some say, the first that revolted from Christianity, and one of the first that was laid in its ruins, in which it still lies, without any church, or ministry.

(2.) By whom this message was sent, the Lord Jesus, who here assumes the character of him that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; taken out of chap. i. 4. where the seven Spirits are said to be before the throne. 1. *He hath the seven Spirits*, that is, the holy Spirit with his various powers, graces, and operations; for he is personally one, though efficaciously various; and may be said here to be seven, which is the number of the churches, and of the angels of the churches, to shew, that to every minister, and to every church,

church, there is a dispensation and measure of the Spirit given for them to profit withal; a stock of spiritual influence for that minister and church to improve, both for the enlargement and continuance; which measure of the Spirit is not ordinarily withdrawn from them, till they forfeit it by misimprovement; churches have their spiritual stock and fund, as well as particular believers; and this epistle being sent unto a languishing ministry and church, therefore they are very fitly put in mind that Christ has the seven Spirits, the Spirit without measure, and in perfection, to whom they may apply themselves for the reviving of his work among them. 2. He hath the seven stars, the angels of the churches; they are disposed of by him, and accountable to him; which should make them faithful and zealous: He hath ministers to employ, and spiritual influences to communicate to his ministers for the good of his church; the holy Spirit usually works by the ministry, and the ministry will be of no efficacy without the Spirit, and the same divine hand holds them both.

2. The body of this epistle, and there is this observable in it, that whereas in the other epistles Christ begins with commending what was good in the churches, and then proceeds to tell them what was amiss, in this (and in the epistle to Laodicea) he begins, (1.) With a reproof, and a very severe one: *I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.* Hypocrisy, and a lamentable decay in religion, are the sins charged upon this church, by one that knew her well, and all her works. 1. This church had gained a great reputation, it had a name, and very honourable one, for a flourishing church; a name for vital, lively religion, for purity of doctrine, unity among themselves, uniformity in worship, decency, and order; we read not of any unhappy divisions among themselves, every thing appeared well, as to what falls under the observation of men. 2. This church was not really what it was reputed to be; they had a name to live, but they were dead; there was a form of godliness, but not the power; a name to live, but not a principle of life; if there was not a total privation of life, yet there was a great deadness in their souls, and in their services; a great deadness in the spirits of their ministers, and a great deadness in their ministrations, in their praying, in their preaching, in their converse; and a great deadness in the people in hearing, in prayer, and in conversation; what little life was yet left among them, was, in a manner, expiring, ready to die. (2.) Our Lord proceeds to give this degenerate church the best advice, ver. 2. *Be watchful, and strengthen the things, &c.* 1. He advises them to be upon their watch; the cause of their sinful deadness and declension was, that they had let down their watch; whenever we are off our watch we lose ground, and therefore must return to our watchfulness against sin and Satan, and whatever is destructive to the life and power of godliness. 2. To strengthen the things that remain, and that are ready to die. Some understand this of persons, there were some few that had retained their integrity, but they were in danger of declining with the rest: It is a difficult thing to keep up to the life and power of godliness ourselves, when we see an universal deadness and declension prevailing round about us. Or it may be understood of practices, as it follows, *I have not found thy works perfect before God, not filled up; there is something wanting in them; there is the shell, but not the kernel; there is the carcase, but not the soul; the shadow, but not the substance; the inward thing is wanting, thy works are hollow and empty; prayers are not filled up with holy desires, alms-deeds not filled up with true charity, sabbaths not filled up with suitable devotion of soul to God; there are not inward affections suitable to outward acts and expressions; now when the spirit is wanting, the form cannot long subsist.* 3. To recollect themselves, and remember how they have received and heard, ver. 3. not only to remember what they had received and heard, what messages they had received from God, what tokens of his mercy and favour towards them, what sermons they had heard, but how they had received and heard, what impressions the mercies of God had made upon their souls at first, what affections they felt working under the word and ordinances, the love of their espousals, the kindness of their youth, how welcome the gospel and the grace of God were to them when they first received them; where is the blessedness they then spoke of? 4. To hold fast what they had received, that they might not lose all, and repent sincerely that they had lost so much of the life of religion, and had run the risk of losing all.

3. Christ enforces his counsel with a dreadful threatening in case it should be despised, ver. 3. *I will come unto thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know the hour.* Observe, 1. When Christ leaves a people as to his gracious presence, he comes to them in judgment, and his judicial presence will be very dreadful to those that have sinned away his gracious presence. 2. His judicial approach to a dead, declining people will be surprizing; their deadness will keep them in security, and, as it procures an angry visit from Christ to them, it will prevent their discerning it, and preparing for it. 3. Such a visit from Christ will be to their loss, he will come as a thief to strip them of their remaining enjoyments and mercies, not by fraud, but in justice and righteousness, taking the forfeiture they have made of all to him.

4. Our blessed Lord does not leave this sinful people without some comfort and encouragement; in the midst of judgment he remembers mercy, ver. 4. and here, 1. He makes honourable mention of the faithful remnant in Sardis, though but small: *Thou hast a few names in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments; had not given in to*

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the prevailing corruptions and pollution of the day and place in which they lived: God takes notice of the smallest number of those who abide with him, and the fewer they are, the more precious in his sight. 2. He makes a very gracious promise to them; *they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy:* In the stole, the white robes of justification, and adoption, and comfort; or in the white robes of honour and glory in the other world; *they shall walk with Christ* in the pleasant walks of the heavenly paradise; and what delightful converse will there be between Christ and them when they thus walk together? And this is an honour proper and suitable to their integrity, and which their fidelity has prepared them for, and which it is no way unbecoming Christ to confer upon them; though it is not a legal, but a gospel worthiness that is ascribed to them; not merit, but meetness; *they that walk with Christ in the clean garments of real practical holiness here, and keep themselves unspotted from the world, shall walk with Christ in the white robes of honour and glory in the other world; this is a suitable reward.*

(3.) We now come to the conclusion of this epistle, in which, as before, we have, 1. A great reward promised to the conquering Christian, ver. 5. and it is very much the same with what has been already mentioned: *He that overcometh, shall be clothed in white raiment; the purity of grace shall be rewarded with the perfect purity of glory; holiness, when perfected, shall be its own reward; glory is the perfection of grace, differing not in kind, but in degree; now to this is added another promise, very suitable to the case; I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.* Observe, 1. Christ has his book of life, a register and roll of all that shall inherit eternal life. (1.) The book of eternal election: (2.) The book of remembrance of all those that have lived to God, and have kept up the life and power of godliness in evil times. 2. Christ will not blot the names of his chosen and faithful ones out of this book of life; men may be enrolled in the registers of the church, as baptized, as making a profession, as having a name to live, and that name may come to be blotted out of the roll, when it appears it was but a name, a name to live, without spiritual life; such oftentimes lose the very name before they die, they are left of God to blot out their own names by their gross and open wickedness, but the names of those that overcome shall never be blotted out. 3. Christ will produce this book of life, and confess the names of the faithful that stand there before God, and all the angels; he will do this as their judge, when the books shall be opened; he will do that as their captain and head, leading them with him triumphantly to heaven, presenting them to the Father: *Behold, me, and the children that thou hast given me:* How great will this honour and reward be! 2. The demand of universal attention finishes the message; every word from God deserves attention from men; that which may seem more particularly directed to one body of men, has something in it instructive to all.

7. And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia, write, These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth: 8. I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. 9. Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan (which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lye) behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. 10. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth. 11. Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. 12. Him that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. 13. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

We are now come to the sixth letter sent to one of the Asian churches; where observe,

1. The inscription, shewing, 1. For whom it was more immediately designed, the angel of the church of Philadelphia; this also was a city in the lesser Asia, seated upon the borders of Mysia and Lydia, and had its name from that brotherly love for which it was eminent: We can hardly suppose that this name was given to it after it received the Christian religion, and that it was so called from that Christian affection that all believers have, and should have, one for another, as the children of one Father, and the brethren of Christ; but rather that it was its ancient name, on the account of that love and kindness which the citizens had, and shewed to each other, as a civil fraternity; which was an excellent spirit, and, when sanctified by the grace of the gospel, would render them an excellent church, as indeed they were; for here is no one fault found with this church, and yet, doubtless, there were faults in it of common

infirmity; but love covers such faults. 2. By whom this letter was signed, even by the same Jesus who is alone the universal head of all the churches; and here observe by what title he chooseth to represent himself to this church, *viz. he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, &c.* you have his personal character, *he that is holy*, and *he that is true*; *holy* in his nature, and therefore cannot but be *true* to his word, for he *hath spoken in his holiness*; and you have also his political character, *he hath the key of David, he openeth, and no man shutteth, &c. the key of the house of David, the key of government and authority in and over the church.*

Where, (1.) Observe the acts of his government: 1. *He opens*: *He opens* a door of opportunity to his churches, *he opens* a door of utterance to his ministers, *he opens* a door of entrance, *opens* the heart, *he opens* a door of admission into the visible church, laying down the terms of communion, and *he opens* the door of admission into the church triumphant, according to the terms of salvation fixed by him. 2. *He shuts* the door; when he pleases, *he shuts* the door of opportunity, and the door of utterance, and leaves obstinate sinners shut up in *the hardness of their hearts*, and *shuts* the door of church fellowship against unbelievers and profane persons, and *he shuts* the door of heaven against the foolish virgins, that have slept away their day of grace, and against the workers of iniquity, how vain and confident soever they may be.

(2.) The way and manner in which he performs these acts, and that is absolute sovereignty, independent upon the will of men, and irresistible by the power of men; *he openeth, and no man shutteth; he shutteth, and no man opens*; he works to will and to do, and when he works none can let. These were proper characters for him, when speaking to a church that had endeavoured to be conformed to Christ in holiness and truth, and that had enjoyed a wide door of liberty and opportunity under his care and government.

2. The subject matter of this epistle; where, (1.) Christ puts them in mind of what he had done for them, *ver. 8. I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it*: I have set it open, and kept it open, though there be many adversaries. Learn here, 1. Christ is to be acknowledged as the author of all the liberty and opportunity his churches enjoy. 2. He takes notice, and keeps account, how long he has preserved their spiritual liberties and privileges for them. 3. That wicked men envy the people of God their door of liberty, and would be glad to shut it against them. 4. That if we do not provoke Christ to shut this door against us, men cannot do it.

(2.) This church is commended, *ver. 8. Thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.* In this there seems to be couched a gentle reproof, *Thou hast a little strength*, a little grace, which, though it be not proportionate to the wide door of opportunity which I have opened to thee, yet is true grace, and has kept thee faithful. True grace, though weak, has the divine approbation; but though Christ accepts *a little strength*, yet believers should not rest satisfied in *a little*, but should strive to *grow in grace*, to be *strong in faith, giving glory to God.* True grace, though weak, will do more than the greatest gifts, or highest degrees of common grace, for it will enable the Christian to keep the word of Christ, and not to deny his name: Obedience, fidelity, and a free confession of the name of Christ, are the fruits of true grace, and are pleasing to Christ as such.

(3.) Here is a promise of the great favours God would bestow on this church, *ver. 9, 10.* This favour consists in two things; 1. Christ would make this church's enemies subject to her: (1.) Those enemies are described to be such as said *they were Jews, but lied* in saying so; pretended to be the only and peculiar people of God, but were really *the synagogue of Satan*: Assemblies that *worship God in spirit and in truth*, are *the Israel of God*; assemblies that either worship false gods, or the true God in a false manner, are *the synagogues of Satan*; though they may profess to be the only people of God, their profession is a *lie*. (2.) Their subjection to the church is described; *they shall worship at thy feet*; not pay a religious and divine honour to the church itself, or to the ministry of it, but shall be convinced that they have been in the wrong, that this church is in the right, and is beloved of Christ, and they shall desire to be taken into communion with her, and that they may worship the same God after the same manner; and how shall this great change be wrought? by the power of God upon the hearts of his enemies, and by signal discoveries of his peculiar favour to his church; *they shall know that I have loved thee.* Observe, 1. The greatest honour and happiness any church can enjoy, is the peculiar love and favour of Christ. 2. Christ can discover this his favour to his people in such a manner as that their very enemies shall see it, and be forced to acknowledge it. 3. That this will, by the grace of Christ, soften the hearts of their enemies, and make them desirous to be admitted into communion with them.

2. Another instance of favour that Christ promises to this church, is persevering grace in the most trying times, *ver. 10.* and this as the reward of their past fidelity; *to him that hath, shall be given.* Here observe, 1. The gospel of Christ is the word of his patience, it is the fruit of the patience of God to a sinful world, it sets before men the exemplary patience of Christ in all his sufferings for men, it calls those that receive it to the exercise of patience in conformity to Christ. 2. This gospel should be carefully kept by all that enjoy it, they must keep up to the faith, and practice, and worship prescribed in the go-

spel. 3. After a day of patience we must expect an hour of temptation; a day of gospel peace and liberty is a day of God's patience, and it is seldom so well improved as it should be, and therefore often followed by an hour of trial and temptation. 4. Sometimes the trial is more general and universal, it comes upon all the world, and when it is so general, it is usually the shorter. 5. They that keep the gospel in a time of peace, shall be kept by Christ in an hour of temptation; by keeping the gospel they are prepared for the trial, and the same divine grace that has made them fruitful in times of peace, will make them faithful in times of persecution.

(4.) Christ calls the church to that duty which he before promised he would enable her to do, and that is to persevere, *to hold fast that which he had.* 1. The duty itself; *Hold fast that which thou hast*; that faith, that truth, that strength of grace, that zeal, that love to the brethren; *thou hast* been possessed of this excellent treasure, *hold it fast.* 2. The motives taken from the speedy appearance of Christ; *Behold, I come quickly*: See, I am just a coming to relieve them under the trial, and to reward their fidelity, and to punish those that fall away; they shall lose that crown that they once seemed to have a right to, and that they hoped for, and pleased themselves with the thoughts of; the persevering Christian shall win the prize from backsliding professors, that once stood fair for it.

3. The conclusion of this epistle, *ver. 12, 13.* where, after his usual manner, our Saviour promises a glorious reward to the victorious believer in two things:

(1.) He shall be a monumental pillar in the temple of God; not a pillar to support the temple, heaven needs no such props, but a monument of the free and powerful grace of God, a monument that shall never be defaced or removed, as many stately pillars erected in honour to the Roman emperors and generals are.

(2.) On this monumental pillar there shall be an honourable inscription, as in those cases is usual: 1. *The name of God*, in whose cause he engaged, whom he served, and for whom he suffered in this warfare; and *the name of the city of God*, the church of God, *the new Jerusalem, which came down from heaven*; on this pillar shall be recorded all the services the believer did to the church of God, how he asserted her rights, enlarged her borders, maintained her purity and honour; this will be a greater name than Asiaticus, or Africanus; a soldier under God in the wars of the church; and then another part of the inscription is, 2. *The new name of Christ, the Mediator, the Redeemer, the Captain of our salvation*; by this it will appear under whose banner this conquering believer was lifted, under whose conduct he acted, by whose example he was encouraged, and under whose influence he fought the good fight, and came off victorious. The epistle is closed up with the demand of attention, *he that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*, how Christ loves and values his faithful people, how he commends, and how he will crown their fidelity.

14. And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, write, These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; 15. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth: 17. Because thou sayst, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. 18. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayst be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayst be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayst see. 19. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent. 20. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. 21. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. 22. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

We are now come to the last and worst of all the seven Asian churches, the reverse of the church of Philadelphia; for as there was nothing reprov'd in that, here is nothing commended in this; and yet this was one of the seven golden candlesticks; for a corrupt church may be still a church here, as before. 1. The inscription, to whom, and from whom: (1.) To whom, *to the angel of the church of Laodicea*; this was a once famous city near the river Lycus, had a wall of vast compass, and three marble theatres, and, like Rome, was built on seven hills: It seems the apostle Paul was very instrumental in planting the gospel in this city, and from hence he wrote a letter, which he mentions in the epistle to the Colossians, the last chapter, and sends salutations to them, as being not above twenty miles distant from Colosse: In this city was held a council in the fourth century, but it has been long since demolished, and lies in its ruins to this day, an awful monument of the wrath of the Lamb.

(2.) From whom was this message sent; here our Lord Jesus styles himself *the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation*

creation of God. 1. *The Amen*, one that is steady and unchangeable in all his purposes and promises, which are all yea, and all amen. 2. *The faithful and true witness*, whose testimony of God to men ought to be received, and fully believed, and whose testimony of men to God will be fully believed and regarded, and will be a swift but true witness against all indifferent, lukewarm professors. 3. The beginning of the creation of God, either of the first creation, and so he is the beginning that is the first cause, the creator, and the governor of it; or of the second creation, the church; and so he is the head of that body, the first-born from the dead, as it is in *chap. i. 5.* from whence these titles are taken. Christ having raised up himself by his own divine power, as the head of a new world, raises up dead souls to be a living temple and church to himself.

2. The subject matter; in which observe, 1. The heavy charge drawn up against this church, ministers and people, by one that knew them better than they knew themselves, *ver. 15. Thou art neither cold nor hot*, but worse than either; *I would thou wert cold or hot*. Lukewarmness or indifference in religion is the worst temper in the world. If religion be a real thing, it is the most excellent thing, and therefore we should be in good earnest in it; if it be not a real thing, it is the vilest imposture, and we should be earnest against it. If religion be worth any thing, it is worth every thing; an indifference here is inexcusable. *Why halt ye between two opinions? If God be God, follow him; if Baal (be God) follow him.* Here is no room for neutrality. An open enemy shall have fairer quarter than a perfidious neuter; and there is more hope of a heathen than of such. Christ expects that men should declare themselves in earnest either for him or against him. 2. A severe punishment threatened, *I will spew thee out of my mouth*. As lukewarm water turns the stomach, and provokes to a vomit, lukewarm professors turn the heart of Christ against them; he is sick of them, and cannot long bear them; they may call their lukewarmness charity, meekness, moderation, and a largeness of soul, it is nauseous to Christ, and makes those so that allow themselves in it; they shall be rejected, and finally rejected; for far be it from the holy Jesus to return to that which has been thus rejected.

3. We have one cause of this indifferency and inconsistency in religion assigned, and that is self-conceit and self-delusion; they thought they were very well already, and therefore they were very indifferent whether they grew better or no, *ver. 17. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, &c.* Here observe, what a difference there was between the thoughts they had of themselves, and the thoughts that Christ had of them.

1. The high thoughts they had of themselves, *Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*; rich, and growing richer, and increased to that degree, as to be above all want, or possibility of wanting. Perhaps they were well provided for as to their bodies, and that made them overlook the necessities of their souls; or they thought themselves well furnished in their souls; they had learning, and they took it for religion; they had gifts, and they took them for grace; they had wit, and they took it for true wisdom; they had ordinances, and they took up with them instead of the God of ordinances. How careful should we be not to put the cheat upon our own souls? Doubtless there are many in hell, that once thought themselves to be in the way to heaven. Let us daily beg of God that we may not be left to flatter and deceive our selves in the concerns of our souls.

2. The mean thoughts that Christ had of them, and he was not mistaken. He knew, though they know not, that they were wretched, and miserable, and poor and blind, and naked; their state was wretched in it self, and such as called for pity and compassion from others; though they were proud of themselves, they were pitied by all that knew their case. For, 1. They were poor, really poor, when they said and thought they were rich; they had no provision for their souls to live upon; their souls were starving in the midst of their abundance; they were vastly in debt to the justice of God, and had nothing to pay off the least part of the debt. 2. They were blind; they could not see their state, nor their way, nor their danger; they could not see into themselves; they could not look before them; they were blind, and yet they thought they saw; the very light that was in them was darkness; and then how great must that darkness be? They could not see Christ, though evidently set forth, and crucified before their eyes; they could not see God by faith, though always present in them; they could not see death, though it was just before them; they could not look into eternity, though they stood upon the very brink of it continually. 3. They were naked, without clothing, and without house and harbour for their souls; they were without clothing, had neither the garment of justification, nor of sanctification; their nakedness both of guilt and pollution had no covering; they lay always exposed to sin and shame; their righteousnesses were but filthy rags; they were rags, and would not cover them; filthy rags, and would defile them; and they were naked, without house or harbour, for they were without God, and he has been the dwelling-place of his people in all ages; in him alone the soul of man can find rest and safety, and all suitable accommodations. *The riches of the body will not enrich the soul; the sight of the body will not enlighten the soul; the most convenient house for the body will not afford rest or safety to the soul; the soul is a different thing from the body, and must have accommodation suitable to its nature, or else in the midst of bodily prosperity it will be wretched and miserable.* 4. We have good counsel given by Christ

to this naughty people, and that is, that they drop their vain and false opinion they had of themselves, and endeavour to be that really which they would seem to be, *ver. 18. I counsel thee to buy of me, &c.* Observe, 1. That our Lord Jesus Christ continues to give good counsel to those that have cast his counsels behind their backs. 2. The condition of sinners is never desperate, while they enjoy the gracious calls and counsels of Christ. 3. That our blessed Lord, the counsellor, always gives the best advice, and that which is most suitable to the sinners case; as here, 1. These people were poor. *Christ counsels them to buy of him gold tried in the fire, that they might be rich*; he lets them know where they might have true riches, and how they might have them; where they might have them, from himself; he sends them not to the streams of Pactolus, nor to the mines of Potosia, but invites them to himself, which is the pearl of price. And how must they have this true gold from him? They must buy it. That seems to be unlaying all again. How can they that are poor buy gold? Why, as they may buy of Christ wine and milk, that is, *without money and without price*, *Isa. lv. 1.* Something indeed must be parted with, but is nothing of a valuable consideration, it is only to make room for receiving true riches. Part with sin and self-sufficiency, and come to Christ with a sense of your poverty and emptiness, that you may be filled with his hidden treasure. 2. These people were naked, Christ tells them where they might have clothing, and such as would cover the shame of their nakedness. This they must receive from Christ; and they must only put off their filthy rags, that they might put on the white raiment that he had purchased and provided for them. His own imputed righteousness for justification, and the garments of holiness and sanctification. 3. They were blind, and he *counsels them to buy of him eye-salve that they might see*; give up their own wisdom and reason, which is but blindness in the things of God, and resign themselves to his word and Spirit, and their eyes shall be opened to see their way and their end, their duty and their true interest; a new and glorious scene would then open it self to their souls; a new world furnished with the most beautiful and excellent objects, and this light would be marvellous to them that were but just now delivered from the powers of darkness. This is the wise and good counsel Christ gives to careless souls, and if they follow it, he will judge himself bound in honour to make it effectual.

5. Here is added great and gracious encouragement to this sinful people to take the admonition and advice well that Christ had given them, *ver. 19, 20.* He tells them, 1. It was given them in true and tender affection, *whom I love, I rebuke and chasten*. You may think I have given you hard words and severe reproofs; it is all out of love to your souls. I would not have thus openly rebuked and corrected your sinful lukewarmness and vain confidence, if I had not been a lover of your souls; had I hated you, I would have let you alone to go on in sin till it had been your ruin. Sinners ought to take the rebukes of God's word and rod as tokens of his good-will to their souls, and should accordingly repent in good earnest, and turn to him that smites them; better are the frowns and wounds of a friend than the flattering smiles of an enemy. 2. That if they would comply with his admonitions, he was ready to make them good to their souls, *ver. 20. Behold, I stand at the door and knock, &c.* Here observe, 1. That Christ is graciously pleased by his word and Spirit to come to the door of the heart of sinners; he draws near to them in a way of mercy, ready to make them a kind visit. 2. He finds this door shut against him; the heart of man is by nature shut up against Christ by ignorance, unbelief, sinful prejudices. 3. When he finds the heart shut, he does not immediately withdraw, but he waits to be gracious, even till his head be filled with the dew. 4. He uses all proper means to awaken sinners, and to cause them to open to him; he calls by his word, he knocks by the impulse of his Spirit upon their conscience. 5. They that open to him shall enjoy his presence to their great comfort and advantage; he will sup with them, he will accept of what is good in them, he will eat his pleasant fruit, and he will bring the best part of the entertainment with him; if what he finds would make but a poor feast, what he brings will make up the deficiency; he will give fresh supplies of graces and comforts, and thereby stir up fresh actings of faith, and love, and delight; and in all this Christ and his repenting people will enjoy pleasant communion each with other. Alas! what do careless, obstinate sinners lose by refusing to open the door of the heart to Christ!

3. We now come to the conclusion of this epistle, and here, as before, 1. The promise made to the overcoming believer. It is here implied, that though this church seemed to be wholly over-run and overcome with lukewarmness and self-confidence, yet it was possible that by the reproofs and counsels of Christ they might be inspired with fresh zeal and vigour, and might come off conquerors in their spiritual warfare. 2. That if they did so, all former faults should be forgiven, and they should have a great reward. And what is that reward? *They shall sit down with me on my throne, as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne, ver. 21.* Here it is intimated. 1. That Christ himself had met with his temptations and conflicts. 2. That he overcame them all, and was more than a conqueror. 3. That as the reward of his conflict and victory, he is set down with God the Father on his throne, possessed of that glory which he had with the Father from eternity, but which he was pleased very much to conceal on earth; leaving it as it were in the hands of the Father as a pledge that he would fulfil the work of

of a Saviour before he reassumed that manifestative glory ; and having done so, then he does *pignus reposcere*, demand the pledge, to appear in his divine glory equal to the Father. 4 That those that are conformed to Christ in his trials and victories shall be conformed to him in his glory ; they shall sit down with him on his throne, on his throne of judgment at the end of the world, on his throne of glory to all eternity, shining in his beams by virtue of their union with him, and relation to him, as the mystical body of which he is the head. 2. All is closed up with the general demand of attention, *ver.* 22. putting all, to whom these epistles shall come, in mind, that what is contained in them is not of private interpretation, not intended only for the instruction, and reproof, and correction of those particular churches, but of all the churches of Christ in all ages and parts of the world : And as there will be a resemblance in all succeeding churches to these, both in their graces and sins ; so they may expect that God will deal with them as he dealt with these, which are patterns to all ages, what faithful and fruitful churches may expect to receive from God, and what those that are unfaithful may expect to suffer from his hand ; yea, that God's dealings with his churches may afford useful instruction to the rest of the world, to put them upon considering, if judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end of them be that do not obey the gospel of Christ ? 1 *Pet.* iv. 17. And thus end the messages of Christ to the Asian churches the epistolary part of this book : We now come to the prophetic part.

C H A P. IV.

In this chapter the prophetic scene opens ; and as the epistolary part opened with a vision of Christ, chap. 1. so this part is introduced with a glorious appearance of the great God, whose throne is in heaven, compassed about with the heavenly host. This discovery was made to John, and in this chapter he, 1. Records the heavenly sight he saw, from ver. 1,—8. And then, 2. The heavy songs he heard, from ver. 8. to the end.

1. **A**fter this I looked, and behold, a door was opened in heaven : and the first voice which I heard, was as it were of a trumpet talking with me ; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. 2. And immediately I was in the spirit : and behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne. 3. And he that sat, was to look upon like a jasper, and a sardine stone : and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. 4. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats : and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment ; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. 5. And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thundrings, and voices : And there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. 6. And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal : And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. 7. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

We have here an account of a second vision, with which the apostle John was favoured. After this, that is, not only after I had seen the vision of Christ walking in the midst of the golden candlesticks, but after I had taken his messages from his mouth, and written and sent them to the several churches according to his command, after this I had another vision. Those that well improve the discoveries they have had of God already, are prepared thereby for more, and may expect them. Observe,

1. The preparation made for the apostle's having this vision. 1. *A door was opened in heaven.* Whence we learn, 1. That whatever is transacted on earth, is first designed and settled in heaven ; there is the model of all the works of God ; all of them are therefore before his eye, and he lets the inhabitants of heaven see as much of them as is fit for them. 2. We can know nothing of future events but what God is pleased to discover to us ; they are within the veil, till God opens the door. But, 3. So far as God reveals his designs to us, we may and ought to receive them, and not pretend to be wiser above what is revealed. 2. To prepare John for the vision, *a trumpet was sounded, and he was called up into heaven to have a sight there of the things which were to be hereafter. He was called into the third heavens.* 1. *There is a way opened into the holiest of all,* into which the sons of God may enter by faith and holy affections now in their spirits when they die, and in their whole persons at the last day. 2. We must not intrude into the secret of God's presence, but stay till we are called up to it. 3. To prepare for this vision *the apostle was in the Spirit*, he was in a rapture, as before, *chap.* i. 10. Whether in the body, or out of the body, we cannot tell ; perhaps he himself could not ; however all bodily actions and sensations were for a time suspended, and his spirit was possessed with the spirit of prophecy, and wholly under a divine influence : The more we abstract our selves from all corporeal things, the more fit we are for communion with God ;

the body is a veil, a cloud and clog to the mind in its transactions with God. We should as it were forget it when we go in before he Lord, in duty, and be willing to drop it, that we may go up to him in heaven. This was the *apparatus* to the vision. Now observe,

2. The vision it self. And it begins with the strange sights that the apostle saw, and they were such as these. 1. *He saw a throne set in heaven*, the seat of honour, and authority, and judgment. Heaven is the throne of God ; there he resides in glory, and from thence he gives laws to the church, and to the whole world ; and all earthly thrones are under the jurisdiction of this throne that is set in heaven. 2. *He saw a glorious one upon the throne.* This throne was not empty, there was one in it that filled it, and that was God who is here described by those things that are most pleasant and precious in our world ; *his countenance was like a jasper and a sardine stone* ; he is not described by any human features, so as to be represented by an image, but only by his transcendent brightness. The jasper is a transparent stone, which yet offers to the eye a variety of the most vivid colours, signifying the glorious perfections of God ; the sardine stone is red, signifying the justice of God ; that essential attribute which he does never divest himself of in favour of any, but does gloriously exert in the government of the world, and especially of the church, through our Lord Jesus Christ. This attribute is displayed in pardoning as well as in punishing, in saving as well as destroying sinners. 3. *He saw a rainbow about the throne like unto an emerald*, *ver.* 3. The rainbow was the seal and token of the covenant of providence that God made with Noah and his posterity with him, and is a fit emblem of that covenant of promise that God has made with Christ as the head of the church, and all his people in him ; which covenant is as the waters of Noah unto God, an everlasting covenant ordered in all things, and sure. This rainbow looked like the emerald ; the most prevailing colour was a pleasant green, to shew the reviving and refreshing nature of the new covenant. 4. *He saw four and twenty seats round about the throne*, not empty, but filled with *four and twenty elders*, presbyters, representing, very probably, the whole church of God, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament state. Not the ministers of the church, but rather the representatives of the people. Their sitting denotes their honour, and their rest, and satisfaction ; their sitting about the throne, signifies their relation to God, their nearness to him, the sight and enjoyment they have of him, and their continual regard to him. *They are clothed in white raiment*, the righteousness of the saints, both imputed and inherent ; *they had on their heads crowns of gold*, signifying the honour and authority given them of God, and the glory they have with him. All these may in a lower sense be applied to the gospel church on earth, in its worshipping assemblies ; and in the higher sense, to the church triumphant in heaven. 5. *He perceived lightnings and voices* proceed out of the throne ; that is, the awful declarations that he makes to his church of his sovereign will and pleasure. Thus he gave forth the law on mount Sinai, and the gospel has not less glory and authority than the law, though it be of a more spiritual nature. 6. *He saw seven lamps of fire burning before the throne*, which are explained *to be the seven spirits of God*, *ver.* 5. The various gifts and graces, and operations of the Spirit of God in the churches of Christ ; these are all dispensed according to the will and pleasure of him that sits upon the throne. 7. *He saw before the throne a sea of glass, like unto crystal.* As in the temple there was a great vessel of brass filled with water, in which the priests were to wash when they went to minister before the Lord ; and this was called a sea : So in the gospel-church, the sea or laver for purification is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, that cleanses from all sin, even from sanctuary sins. And in this all those must be washed that are admitted into the gracious presence of God on earth, or his glorious presence in heaven. 8. *He saw four animals*, living creatures, between the throne and the circle of the elders (as seems most probable) standing between God and the people ; these seem to signify the ministers of the gospel, not only because of this their situation nearer to God, and between him and the elders or representatives of the Christian people, and because fewer in number than the people ; but as they are here described, 1. By their many eyes, denoting sagacity, vigilance and circumspection. 2. By their lion-like courage, their great labour and diligence, in which they resemble the ox ; their prudence and discretion becoming men ; and their sublime affections and speculations, by which they mount up *with wings like eagles towards heaven*, *ver.* 7. and these wings full of eyes within, to shew that in all their meditations and ministrations they are to act with knowledge, and especially should be well acquainted with themselves and the state of their own souls, and see their own concern in the great doctrines and duties of religion, watching over their own souls as well as the souls of the people. 3. By their continual employment, and that is praising God, and not ceasing to do so night and day. The elders sit and are ministered unto, they stand and minister, they rest not night and day. This now leads to the other part of the representation.

8. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him, and they were full of eyes within ; and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. 9. And when those beasts give glory, and honour, and thanks to him that sat on the throne,

throne, who liveth for ever and ever. 10. The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, 11. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are, and were created.

We have considered the sights that the apostle saw in heaven, now let us observe, 2. The songs that he heard, for there is in heaven not only that to be seen that will highly please a sanctified eye, but there is that to be heard that will greatly delight a sanctified ear. It is true concerning the church of Christ here, which is an heaven upon earth, and it will be eminently so in the church made perfect in the heaven of heavens. 1. He heard the song of the four living creatures, of the ministers of the church, which refers to the prophet Ely's vision, chap. 6. And here, 1. They adore one God, the one only, *the Lord God Almighty*, unchangeable and everlasting. 2. They adore three holies in this one God, the holy Father, the holy Son, and the holy Spirit, and these are one infinitely holy and eternal being, that sits upon the throne, *and lives for ever and ever*. In this glory the prophet saw Christ and spake of him. 2. He heard the adorations of the *four and twenty elders*, that is, of the Christian people represented by them; the ministers led, and the people followed in the praises of God, ver. 10, 11. Where observe, 1. The object of their worship, the same with that which the ministers adored, *him that sat on the throne*, the eternal, everliving God. The true church of God has one and the same object of worship: Two different objects of worship, either co-ordinate or subordinate, would confound the worship, and divide the worshippers. It is unlawful to join in divine worship with those that either mistake or multiply the object. There is but one God, and he alone as God is worshipped by the church on earth and in heaven. 2. The acts of adoration. 1. *They fell down before him that sat on the throne*; they discovered the most profound humility, reverence and godly fear. 2. *They cast down their crowns before the throne*; they gave God the glory of that holiness wherewith he had crowned their souls on earth, and that honour and happiness with which he crowns them in heaven: They owe all their graces and all their glories to him, and acknowledge that his crown is infinitely more glorious than theirs, and that it is their glory to be glorifying God. 3. The words of adoration, they said, *thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour and power*, ver. 11. Observe, 1. They do not say we give thee glory, and honour, and power; for what can any creature pretend to give unto God? but they say, *thou art worthy to receive glory*. 2. In this they tacitly acknowledge, that God was exalted far above all blessing and praise; he was worthy to receive glory, but they were not worthy to praise, nor able to do it according to his infinite excellencies. 3. We have the ground and reason of their adoration, which is threefold. 1. He is the creator of all things, the first cause; and none but the creator of all things should be adored, no made thing can be the object of religious worship. 2. He is the preserver of all things, and his preservation is a continual creation; they are created still by the sustaining power of God; all beings but God are dependent upon the will and power of God, and no dependent being must be set up as an object of religious worship: It is the part of the best dependent beings to be worshippers, not to be worshipped. 3. He is the final cause of all things; *for thy pleasure they are and were created*. It was his will and pleasure to create all things, he was not put upon it by the will of another; there is no such thing as a subordinate creator, that acts under and by the will and power of another; and if there were, he ought not to be worshipped; and as he made all things at his pleasure, he made them for his pleasure, to deal with them as he pleases, and to glorify himself by them one way or other. Though he delights not in the death of sinners, but rather that they should turn and live, yet he hath made all things for himself, Prov. xvi. 4. Now if these be true and sufficient grounds for religious worship, as they are proper to God alone, Christ must needs be God, one with the Father and Spirit, and be worshipped as such; for we find the same causality ascribed to him, Col. i. 16, 17. *All things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist*.

C H A P. V.

In the foregoing chapter the prophetic scene was opened, in the sight and hearing of the apostle, and he had a sight of God, the creator and ruler of the world, and the great king of the church. He saw God on the throne of glory and government, surrounded with his holy ones, and receiving their adorations. Now the counsels and decrees of God, are set before the apostle, as in a book, which God held in his right hand; and this book is represented, 1. As sealed in the hand of God, from, ver. 1,—6. 2. As taken into the hand of Christ the redeemer, to be unsealed and opened, from, ver. 6. to the end.

1. **A**ND I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne, a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. 2. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? 3. And no man in heaven, nor

in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. 4. And I wept much because no man was found worthy to open, and to read the book, neither to look thereon. 5. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

Hitherto the apostle had only seen the great God governor of all things; now, 1. He is favoured with a sight of the model and methods of his government, as they are all written down in a book which he holds in his hand; and this we are now to consider as shut up and sealed in the hand of God. Observe, 1. That the designs and methods of divine providence towards the church and the world are stated and fixed; they are resolved upon, and agreed to, as that which is written in a book: The great design is laid, every part adjusted, all determined, and every thing passed into decree, and made a matter of record. The original and first draught of this book, is the book of God's decrees, laid up in his own cabinet, in his eternal mind: But there is a transcript of so much as was necessary to be known, in the book of the scripture in general; in the prophetic part of scripture especially, and in this prophecy in particular. 2. God holds this book in his right hand, to declare the authority of the book, and his readiness and resolution to execute all the contents thereof, all the counsels and purposes therein recorded. 3. This book in the hand of God is shut up and sealed; it is known to none but himself, till he allows it to be opened. Known unto God, and to him alone, are all his works, from the beginning of the world; but it is his glory to conceal the matter as he pleases: The times and seasons, and their great events, he hath kept in his own hand and power. 4. *It is sealed with seven seals*. This tells us, with what inscrutable secrecy the counsels of God are hid, how impenetrable by the eye and intellect of the creature; and also points to us seven several parts of this book of God's counsels; each part seems to have its particular seal, and when opened discovers its proper events; and these seven parts are not unsealed and opened at once, but successively, one scene of providence introducing another, and explaining it, till the whole mystery of God's counsel and conduct be finished in the world.

2. He heard a proclamation made concerning this sealed book. 1. The crier was a *strong angel*: Not that there are any weak ones among the angels in heaven, though there are many among the angels of the churches. This angel seems to come out, not only as a crier, but as a champion, with a challenge to any, or all the creatures, to try the strength of their wisdom in opening the counsels of God; and as a champion, he cried with a loud voice, that every creature might hear. 2. The cry or challenge proclaimed was, *who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof*, ver. 2. If there be any creature that thinks himself sufficient either to explain or execute the counsels of God, let him stand forth, and make the attempt. 3. None in heaven or earth could accept the challenge, and undertake the task. None in heaven, none of the glorious holy angels, though before the throne of God, and the ministers of his providence; they with all their wisdom, cannot dive into the decrees of God. None on earth, no man, the wisest or the best of men; none of the magicians and sooth-sayers; none of the prophets of God, any farther than he reveals his mind to them. *None under the earth*; none of the fallen angels, none of the spirits of men departed, though they should return to our world can open this book. Satan himself, with all his subtilty, cannot do it; the creatures cannot open it, nor look on it; they cannot read it, God can only do it.

3. He felt a great concern in himself about this matter; the apostle *wept much*; it was a great disappointment to him: By what he had seen in him that sat upon the throne, he was very desirous to see and know more of his mind and will: And this desire, when not presently gratified, filled him with sorrow, and fetched many tears from his eyes. Here observe, 1. Those that have seen most of God in this world, are most desirous to see more; and they that have seen his glory, desire to know his will. 2. Good men may be too eager and too hasty to look into the mysteries of divine conduct. 3. Such desires, not presently answered, turn to grief and sorrow; hope deferred makes the heart sick.

4. The apostle was comforted, and encouraged to hope this sealed book should yet be opened. Here observe, 1. Who it was that gave St. John the hint; *one of the elders*. God had revealed it to his church; if angels do not refuse to learn from the church, ministers should not disdain to do it. God can make his people to instruct and inform their teachers, when he pleases. 2. Who it was that would do the thing; the Lord Jesus Christ, called, *the lion of the tribe of Judah*, according to his human nature; alluding to Jacob's prophecy, Gen. iv. 10. and, *the root of David*, according to his divine nature, though a branch of David, according to the flesh. He who is a middle person, God and man, and bears the office of mediator between God and man, is fit and worthy to open and execute all the counsels of God towards men. And this he does in his mediatorial state and capacity, *as the root of David, and the offspring of Judah*; and as the king and head of the Israel of God; and he will do it, to the consolation and joy of all his people.

6. And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders stood a Lamb

as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. 7. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. 8. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts, and four *and* twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. 9. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; 10. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. 11. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts, and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; 12. Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing, 13. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, *be* unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. 14. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

Here, 1. The apostle beholds this book taken into the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to its being opened and executed by him. Where Christ is described, 1. By his place and station; *in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and of the elders.* He was on the same throne with the Father, he was nearer to him than either the elders or ministers of the churches. Christ, as man and mediator, is subordinate to God the Father, but is nearer to him than all the creatures, *for in him all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily.* The ministers stand between God, and the people. Christ stands as mediator between God and both ministers and people. 2. The form in which he appeared. Before he is called *a lion*; here he appears *as a lamb slain*: He is lion to conquer Satan, a lamb to satisfy the justice of God. He appears with the marks of his sufferings upon him, to shew that he intercedes in heaven, in the virtue of his satisfaction. He appears as a *lamb, having seven horns, and seven eyes*; perfect power to execute all the will of God, and perfect wisdom to understand it all, and to do it in the most effectual manner; *for he hath the seven Spirits of God*, he has received the holy Spirit without measure, in all perfection of light, and life, and power, by which he is able to teach and rule all parts of the earth. 3. He is described by his act and deed: *He came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat on the throne*, ver. 7. not by violence, nor by fraud; but he prevailed to do it, as ver. 5. he prevailed by his merit and worthiness, he did it by authority, and by the Father's appointment: God very willingly and justly put the book of his eternal counsels into the hand of Christ, and Christ as readily and gladly took it into his hand; for he delights to reveal, and to do the will of his Father.

2. The apostle observes the universal joy and thanksgiving that filled heaven and earth upon this transaction. No sooner had Christ received this book out of the Father's hand, but he receives the applauses and adorations of angels and men, yea, of every creature. And indeed, it is just matter of joy to all the world to see, that God does not deal with men in a way of absolute power and strict justice, but in a way of grace and mercy, through the Redeemer: He governs the world, not merely as a creator and law-giver, but as our God and Saviour. All the world has reason to rejoice in this.

The song of praise that was offered up to the Lamb on this occasion, consists of three parts; one part sung by the church, the other by the church and the angels, the third by every creature.

1. The church begins the doxology, as being more immediately concerned in it, ver. 8. the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders, the Christian people, under their minister, they lead up the chorus; where observe, 1. The object of their worship, *the Lamb*, the Lord Jesus Christ; it is the declared will of God, that all men *should honour the Son, as they honour the Father*; for he has the same nature. 2. Their posture; *they fell down before him*; gave him not an inferior sort of worship, but the most profound adoration. 3. The instruments used in their adorations; *harps and vials*; the harps were the instruments of praise, the vials were full of odours, or incense, which signify *the prayers of the saints*; prayer and praise should always go together. 4. The matter of their song; it was suited to the new state of the church, the gospel state in this new Son. 1. They acknowledge the infinite fitness and worthiness of the Lord Jesus for this great work of opening and executing the counsel and purposes of God, ver. 9. *Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof*; every way sufficient for the work, and deserving of the honour. 2. They mention the grounds and reasons of this worthiness, and though they do not exclude the dignity of his person as God, without which he had not been sufficient for it, yet they chiefly insist upon the merit of his sufferings, which he had en-

dured for them; these more sensibly struck their souls with thankfulness and joy: Here, 1. They mention his suffering; *thou wast slain, slain as a sacrifice, thy blood was shed.* 2. The fruits of his sufferings: 1. Redemption to God; *Christ has redeemed his people from the bondage of sin, guilt, and Satan; redeemed them to God; set them at liberty to serve him, and to enjoy him.* 2. High exaltation; *thou hast made us to our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth*, ver. 10. Every ransomed slave is not immediately preferred to honour, he thinks it a great favour to be restored to liberty; but when the elect of God were made slaves by sin and Satan, in every nation of the world, Christ not only purchased their liberty for them, but the highest honour and preferment, *made them kings and priests; kings, to rule over their own spirits, and to overcome the world, and the evil one*; and he has made them priests, given them access to himself, and liberty to offer up spiritual sacrifices, and *they shall reign on the earth*; they shall, with him, judge the world at the great day. 2. The doxology thus begun by the church, is carried on by the angels, they take the second part, in conjunction with the church, ver. 11. they are said to be *innumerable*, and to be the attendants on the throne of God, and guardians to the church; and though they did not need a Saviour themselves, yet they rejoice in the redemption and salvation of sinners; and they agree with the church in acknowledging the infinite merits of the Lord Jesus as dying for sinners, that he is *worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.* 1. He is worthy of that office and authority which requires the greatest power and wisdom, the greatest fund, all excellency, to discharge it aright; and, 2. That he is *worthy of all honour, and glory, and blessing*, because he is sufficient for the office, and faithful in it. 3. This doxology, thus begun by the church, and carried on by the angels, is resounded and echoed by the whole creation, ver. 13. heaven and earth ring with the high praises of the Redeemer, the whole creation fares the better for Christ, *by him all things consist*; and all the creatures, had they sense and language, would adore that great Redeemer, who delivers the creature from that bondage under which it groans, through the corruption of men, and the just curse denounced by the great God upon the fall; that part that (by a *propopœia*) is made for the whole creation, is a song of *blessing, and honour, and glory, and power*; 1. *To him that sits on the throne*, to God, as God; or to God the Father, as the first person in the Trinity, and the first in the œconomy of our salvation; and, 2. *To the Lamb*, as the second person in the Godhead, and the mediator of the new covenant; not that the worship paid to the Lamb is of another nature, an inferior worship, for the very same *honour and glory* is in the same words ascribed to the Lamb, and to him that sits on the throne; their essence being the same, but their parts in the work of our salvation being distinct, they are distinctly adored: We worship and glorify one and the same God for our creation, and for our redemption.

And we see how the church that begun the heavenly anthem, finding heaven and earth join in the consort, closes all with their *Amen*, and end, as they began, with a low prostration before the eternal and everlasting God. Thus we have seen this sealed book passing with great solemnity from the hand of the Creator into the hand of the Redeemer.

C H A P. VI.

The book of the divine counsels being thus lodged in the hand of Christ, he loses no time, but immediately enters upon the work of opening the seals, and publishing the contents; but this is done in such a manner, as still leaves the predictions very abstruse, and difficult to be understood: Hitherto the waters of the sanctuary have been as those in Ezekiel's vision, only to the ankles, or to the knees, or to the loins at least; but here they begin to be a river that cannot be passed over; the visions which John saw, the epistles to the churches, the songs of praise, in the two foregoing chapters, had some things dark, and hard to be understood; and yet they were rather milk for babes, than meat for strong men; but now we are to launch into the deep, and our business is not so much to fathom it, as to let down our net to take a draught: We shall only hint at what seems most obvious; the prophecies of this book are divided into seven seals opened, seven trumpets sounding, and seven vials poured out; it is supposed that the opening of the seven seals discloses those providences that were conversant about the church in the three first centuries, from the ascension of our Lord and Saviour, to the reign of Constantine; this was represented in a book rolled up, and sealed in several places, so that when one seal was opened, you might read so far of it, and so on, till the whole was unfolded: Yet we are not here told what was written in the book, but what John saw in figures ænigmatical and hieroglyphick; and it is not for us to pretend to know the times and the seasons which the Father has put in his own power.

In this chapter six of the seven seals are opened, and the visions attending them are related; the first seal in ver. 1, 2. the second seal in ver. 3, 4. the third seal in ver. 5, 6. the fourth seal in ver. 7, 8. the fifth seal in ver. 9, — 11. the sixth seal in ver. 12, 13, &c.

1. **A**ND I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts, saying, Come, and see. 2. And I saw, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat on him had a bow

bow, and a crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

Here, 1. Christ, *the Lamb*, opens the first seal, he now enters upon the great work of opening and accomplishing the purposes of God towards the church and the world. 2. One of the ministers of the church calls upon the apostle, with a voice like *thunder*, to come near, and observe what then appeared. 3. We have the vision itself, *ver. 2.* 1. The Lord Jesus appears riding on a *white horse*; *white horses* are generally refused in war, because they make the rider a mark for the enemy; but our Lord Redeemer was sure of the victory, and a glorious triumph, and he rides on the *white horse* of a pure, but despised gospel, with great swiftness through the world.

2. *He had a bow* in his hand; the convictions impressed by the word of God are sharp arrows, they reach at a distance, and though the ministers of the word draw the bow at a venture, God can and will direct it to the joints of the harness; this bow, in the hand of Christ, abides in strength, and, like that of Jonathan, *never returns empty*.

3. *A crown was given him*, importing, that all who receive the gospel, must receive Christ as a king, and must be his loyal and obedient subjects; he will be glorified in the success of the gospel: When Christ was going to war, one would think an helmet had been more proper than a *crown*; but a *crown* is given him as the earnest and emblem of victory.

4. *He went forth conquering, and to conquer*. As long as the church continues militant, Christ will be *conquering*; when he has *conquered* his enemies in one age, he meets with new ones in another age; men go on opposing, and Christ goes on *conquering*; and his former victories are pledges of future victories; *he conquers* his enemies in his people; their sins are their enemies, and his enemies; when Christ comes with power into their soul, he begins to *conquer* these enemies, and he goes on *conquering*, in the progressive work of sanctification, till he has gained us complete victory; and *he conquers* his enemies in the world, wicked men, some by bringing them to his foot, others by making them his footstool. Observe, from this *seal opened*, 1. That the successful progress of the gospel of Christ in the world is a glorious fight, worth beholding, the most pleasant and welcome fight that a good man can see in this world. 2. That, whatever convulsions and revolutions happen in the states and kingdoms of the world, the kingdom of Christ shall be established and enlarged in spite of all opposition. 3. That a morning of opportunity usually goes before a night of calamity, the gospel is preached before the plagues are poured forth. 4. Christ's work is not all done at once, we are ready to think when the gospel goes forth, it should carry all the world before it, but it often meets with opposition, and moves slowly; however, Christ will do his own work effectually, in his own time and way.

3. And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come, and see. 4. And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon, to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword. 5. And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come, and see. And I beheld, and lo, a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. 6. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine. 7. And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come, and see. 8. And I looked, and behold, a pale horse; and his name that sat on him was Death, and hell followed with him: and power was given unto them, over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

The three next *seals* give us a sad prospect of great and desolating judgments, with which God uses to punish those that either refuse, or abuse the everlasting gospel; though some understand them of the persecutions that befel the church of Christ, and others of the destruction of the Jews, they rather seem more generally to represent God's terrible judgments, by which he avenges the quarrel of his covenant upon those that make light of it.

1. Upon opening the second seal, to which John was called to attend, another horse appears, of a different colour from the former, a *red horse*, *ver. 4.* this signifies the desolating judgment of war; he that sat upon this *red horse* had power to take peace from the earth, and that the inhabitants of the earth should kill one another: Who this was that sat upon the *red horse*, whether Christ himself, as Lord of hosts, or the instruments that he raised up to conduct the war, is not clear; but this is certain, 1. That those who will not submit to the bow of the gospel, must expect to be cut in sunder by the sword of divine justice. 2. That Jesus Christ rules and commands, not only in the kingdom of grace, but of providence. And, 3. That the sword of war is a dreadful judgment, it takes away peace from the earth, one of the greatest blessings, and it puts men upon killing one another; men, that should love one another, and help one another, are in a state of war, set upon killing one another.

2. Upon opening the third seal, which John is bid to observe, another horse appears, different from the former, a *black horse*, signifying famine, that terrible judgment, and he that sat on that horse, had a pair of balances in his hand, *ver. 5.* signifying, that men must now eat their bread by weight, as was threatened, *Lev. xxvi. 26.* They shall deliver your bread to you by weight. That which follows in *ver. 6.* of the voice that cried, *A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine*; has made some expositors think this was not a vision of famine, but of plenty; but if we consider the quantity of their measure, and the value of their penny, at the time of this prophecy, the objection will be removed; their measure was but a single quart, and their penny was our seven-pence-halfpenny, and that is a great deal to give for a quart of wheat; however, it seems, this famine, as all others, fell most severely upon the poor; whereas the oil and the wine, which were dainties of the rich, were not hurt; but if bread, the staff of life, be broken, dainties will not supply the place of it: Here observe, 1. That when a people loathe their spiritual food, God may justly deprive them of their daily bread. 2. That one judgment seldom comes alone, and the judgment of war naturally draws after it that of famine; and those that will not humble themselves under one judgment, must expect another, and yet greater; for when God contends he will prevail: The famine of bread is a terrible judgment, but the famine of the word is more so, though careless sinners are not sensible of it.

3. Upon opening the fourth seal, which John is commanded to observe, there appears another horse, of a pale colour; where observe, 1. The name of the rider, *Death*, the king of terrors; the pestilence, which is death in its empire, death reigning over a place or nation, death on horseback, marching about, and making fresh conquests every hour. 2. The attendants or followers of this king of terrors, and that is hell, a state of eternal misery to all those that die in their sins; and, in times of such a general destruction, multitudes go down unprepared into the valley of destruction: It is an awful thought, and enough to make the whole world to tremble, that eternal damnation immediately follows upon the death of an unrepentant sinner. Observe, 1. There is a natural as well as a judicial connexion between one judgment and another; war is a wasting calamity, and draws scarcity and famine after it; and famine, not allowing men proper sustenance, and forcing them to take that which is unwholesome, often draws the pestilence after it. 2. God's quiver is full of arrows, he is never at a loss for ways and means to punish a wicked people. 3. In the book of God's counsels he has prepared judgments for scorners, as well as mercy for returning sinners. 4. In the book of the scriptures God hath published threatnings against the wicked, as well as promises to the righteous; and it is our duty to observe and believe the threatnings, as well as the promises.

4. After the opening of these seals of approaching judgments, and the distinct account of them, we have this general observation, that God gave power to them, over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth, *ver. 8.* he gave them power, that is, those instruments of his anger, or those judgments themselves; he that holds the winds in his hand, has all publick calamities at his command, and they can only go when he sends them, and no farther than he permits: To the three great judgments of war, famine, and pestilence, is here added the beasts of the earth, another of God's fore judgments, mentioned *Ezek. xiv. 21.* and mentioned the last; because when a nation is depopulated by the sword, famine, and pestilence, the small remnant that continued in a waste and howling wilderness, encourage the wild beasts to make head against them, and they become an easy prey. Others, by the beasts of the field, understand brutish, cruel, savage men, that, having divested themselves of all humanity, delight to be the instruments of the destruction of others.

9. And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. 10. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11. And white robes were given unto every one of them, and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also, and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. 12. And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; 13. And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind: 14. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places: 15. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every freeman hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains; 16. And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face

face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: 17. For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

In the remaining part of this chapter, we have the opening of the fifth and the sixth seals.

(1.) *The fifth seal*; and here is no mention made of any one that called the apostle to make his observation, either because the decorum of the vision was to be observed, and each of the four living creatures had discharged their duty of a monitor before, or because the events here opened lay out of the sight, and beyond the time of the present ministers of the church, or because it does not contain a new prophecy of any future events, but rather opens a spring of support and consolation to those that had been, and still were, under great tribulation for the sake of Christ, and the gospel. Here observe,

1. The sight this apostle saw at the opening of the fifth seal, and it was a very affecting sight, *ver. 9. I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held.* He saw the souls of the martyrs. Here observe, (1.) Where he saw them, *under the altar*; at the foot of the altar of incense, in the most holy; he saw them in heaven, at the foot of Christ. Hence note, 1. That persecutors can only kill the body, and after that there is no more that they can do, their souls live. 2. God has provided a good place in the better world for those who are faithful to death, and are not allowed a place any longer on earth. 3. That holy martyrs are very near to Christ in heaven, they have the highest place there. 4. That it is not their own death, but the sacrifice of Christ that gives them a reception into heaven, and a reward there; they do not wash their robes in their own blood, but in the blood of the Lamb. (2.) What was the cause in which they suffered, *the word of God, and the testimony which they held*; for believing the word of God, and attesting or confessing the truth of it; this profession of their faith they held fast without wavering, even though they died for it: A noble cause! the best that any man can lay down his life for; faith in God's word, and a confession of that faith!

2. The cry he heard; it was a loud cry, and contains an humble expostulation about the long delay of avenging justice against their enemies: *How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?* *ver. 10.* Observe, 1. That even the spirits of just men made perfect retain a proper resentment of the wrong they have sustained by their cruel enemies; and though they die in charity, praying, as Christ did, that God would forgive them, yet they are desirous that, for the honour of God, and Christ, and the gospel, and for the terror and conviction of others, God will take a just revenge upon the sin of persecution, even while he pardons and saves the persecutors. 2. That they commit their cause to him to whom vengeance belongeth, and leave it in his hand; they are not for avenging themselves, but leave all to God. 3. That there will be joy in heaven at the destruction of the implacable enemies of Christ, and Christianity, as well as at the conversion of other sinners: When Babylon falls, it will be said, *Rejoice over her, O thou heavens, and ye holy apostles and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her,* *Rev. xviii. 20.*

3. He observed the kind return that was made to this cry, *ver. 11.* both what was given them, and what was said to them: 1. What was given to them, *white robes*, the robes of victory and of honour; their present happiness was an abundant recompence of their past sufferings. 2. What was said to them, that they should be satisfied, and easy in themselves, for it would not be long but the number of their fellow-sufferers should be fulfilled; this is a language rather suited to the imperfect state of the saints in this world, than to the perfection of their state in heaven; there is no impatience, no uneasiness, no need of admonition; but in this world there is great need of patience. Observe, 1. There is a number of Christians known to God, that are appointed as *sheep for the slaughter*, set apart to be God's witnesses. 2. That as the measure of the sin of persecutors is filling up, so is the number of the persecuted martyred servants of Christ. 3. That when this number is fulfilled, God will take a just and glorious revenge upon their cruel persecutors; he will recompense tribulation to those that trouble them, and to those that are troubled, full and uninterrupted rest.

(2.) We have here the sixth seal opened, *ver. 12.* Some refer this to the great revolutions in the empire in Constantine's time, the downfall of paganism; others, with great probability, to the destruction of Jerusalem, as an emblem of the general judgment, and destruction of the wicked, at the end of the world; and, indeed, the awful characters of this event are so much the same with those signs mentioned by our Saviour, as foreboding the destruction of Jerusalem, that it hardly leaves any room for doubting but that the same thing is meant in both places, though, some think, that event was past already: See *Matt. xxiv. 29, 30.* Here observe,

1. The tremendous events that were hastening, and here are several occurrences that contribute to make that day and dispensation very dreadful: 1. *There was a great earthquake*; this may be taken in a political sense; the very foundations of the Jewish church and state would be terribly shaken, though they seemed to be as stable as the earth itself. 2. *The sun became black as sackcloth of hair*, either naturally, by a total eclipse, or politically, by the fall of the chief rulers and governors of the land. 3. *The moon should become as blood*, the inferior officers, or the military men, they should be all wal-

lowing in their own blood. 4. *The stars of heaven should fall to the earth*, *ver. 13.* and that as a fig-tree casteth her untimely figs when she is shaken of a mighty wind. The stars may signify all the men of note and influence among them, though, in lower spheres of activity, there should be a general desolation. 5. *The heaven should depart as a scroll when it is rolled together.* That may intend, their ecclesiastical state shall perish and be laid aside for ever. 6. *Every mountain and island shall be moved out of their places*: The destruction of the Jewish nation should affect and affright all the nations round about, those that were highest in honour, and those that seemed to be best secured; it would be a judgment that should astonish all the world: This leads to,

2. The dread and terror that would seize upon all sorts of men in that great and awful day, *ver. 15.* neither authority, nor grandeur, nor riches, nor valour, nor strength, would be able to support men at that time; yea, the very poor slaves, that, one would think, had nothing to fear, because they had nothing to lose, would be all in amazement at that day. Here observe, 1. The degree of their terror and astonishment, it should prevail so far as to make them, like distracted, desperate men, to call to the mountains to fall upon them, and to the hills to cover them; they would be glad to be no more seen; yea, to have no longer any being. 2. The cause of their terror, and that was the angry countenance of him that sits on the throne, and the wrath of the Lamb. Observe, 1. That which is matter of displeasure to Christ, is so to God; they are so intirely one, that what pleases or displeases the one, pleases or displeases the other. 2. Though God be invisible, he can make the inhabitants of this world sensible of his awful frowns. 3. Though Christ be a Lamb, yet he can be angry, even to wrath, and that the wrath of the Lamb is exceeding dreadful; for if the Redeemer, that appeases the wrath of God, himself be our wrathful enemy, where shall we have a friend to plead for us? They perish without remedy, that perish by the wrath of the Redeemer. 4. That as men have their day of opportunity, and their seasons of grace, so God has his day of righteous wrath, and when that day comes, the most stout-hearted sinners will not be able to stand before him; all these terrors actually fell upon the sinners in Judea and Jerusalem in the day of their destruction, and they will all, in the utmost degree, fall upon impenitent sinners, at the general judgment of the last day.

C H A P. VII.

The things contained in this chapter come in after the opening of the six seals, which foretold great calamities in the world; and before the sound of the seven trumpets, which gave notice of great corruptions arising in the church; between these comes in this comfortable chapter, which secures the graces and comforts of the people of God in times of common calamity. We have, 1. An account of the restraint laid upon the winds, *ver. 1.—3.* 2. The sealing of the servants of God, *ver. 4.—9.* 3. The songs of angels and saints on this occasion, *ver. 9.—13.* 4. A description of the reward and happiness of those that had faithfully served Christ, and suffered for him, *ver. 13, &c.*

1. **A**ND after these things, I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. 2. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, 3. Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

Here we have an account of the restraint laid upon the winds; by these winds we suppose are meant those errors and corruptions in religion which would occasion a great deal of trouble and mischief to the church of God; sometimes the holy Spirit is compared to the wind, here the spirits of error are compared to the four winds, contrary one to another, but doing much hurt to the church, the garden and vineyard of God, breaking the branches, and blasting the fruits of his plantation; the devil is called the prince of the power of the air, he, by a great wind, overthrew the house of Job's eldest son; errors are as wind, by which they that are unstable are shaken, and carried to and fro, *Eph. iv. 14.* Observe, 1. There are called the winds of the earth, because they blow only in these lower regions near the earth, heaven is always clear and free from them. 2. They are restrained by the ministry of angels, standing on the four corners of the earth, intimating, that the spirit of error cannot go forth till God permits it, and that the angels minister to the good of the church by restraining its enemies. 3. Their restraint was only for a season, and that was, till the servants of God were sealed in their foreheads; God has a particular care and concern for his own servants in times of temptation and corruption, and he has a way to secure them from the common infection; he first establishes them, and then he tries them; he has the timing of their trials in his own hand.

4. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand, of all the tribes of the children of Israel. 5. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve

twelve thousand. 6. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. 7. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. 8. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

We have here an account of the sealing of the servants of God ; where observe, 1. To whom this work was committed, to an angel, another angel ; while some of the angels were employed to restrain Satan and his agents, another angel was employed to mark out and distinguish the faithful servants of God. 2. How they were distinguished, the seal of God was set upon their foreheads, a seal known to him, and as plain as if it appeared in their forehead ; by this mark they were set apart for mercy and safety in the worst of times. 3. The number of those that were sealed ; where observe, 1. A particular account of those that were sealed of the twelve tribes of Israel, twelve thousand out of every tribe, the whole sum amounting to an hundred and forty four thousand ; in this list the tribe of Dan is omitted, perhaps, because they were greatly addicted to idolatry ; and the order of the tribes is altered, perhaps, according as they had been more or less faithful to God. Some take these to be a select number of the Jews that were reserved for mercy at the destruction of Jerusalem ; others think that time was past, and therefore it is to be more generally applied to God's chosen remnant in the world ; but if the destruction of Jerusalem was not yet over (and I think it is hard to prove that it was) it seems more proper to understand this of the remnant of that people which God hath reserved according to the election of grace ; only here we have a definite number for an indefinite. 2. A general account of those that were saved out of other nations, ver. 9. A great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues ; though these are not said to be sealed, yet they were selected by God out of all nations, and brought into his church, and there stood before the throne. Observe, 1. God will have a greater harvest of souls among the Gentiles, than he had among the Jews ; more are the children of the desolate than of the married woman. 2. The Lord knows who are his, and he will keep them safe in times of dangerous temptation. 3. That though the church of God is but a little flock, in comparison of the wicked world, yet it is no contemptible society, but really large, and to be still more enlarged.

9. After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands ; 10. And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. 11. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, 12. Saying, Amen : Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

Here we have the songs of saints and angels on this occasion ; where observe, 1. The praises offered up by the saints, and, as it seems to me, by the Gentile believers, for the care of God in reserving so large a remnant of the Jews, and saving them from infidelity and destruction. The Jewish church prayed for the Gentiles before their conversion, and the Gentile churches have reason to bless God for his distinguishing mercy to so many of the Jews, when the rest were cut off. Here observe, 1. The posture of these praising saints, they stood before the throne, and before the Lamb ; before the Creator, and the Mediator. In acts of religious worship we come nigh to God, and are to conceive ourselves as in his special presence ; and we must come to God by Christ ; the throne of God would be inaccessible to sinners, were it not for a mediator. 2. Their habit, they were clothed with white robes, and had palms in their hands ; they were invested with the robes of justification, holiness, and victory, and had palms in their hands, as conquerors used to appear in their triumphs ; such a glorious appearance will the faithful servants of God make at last, when they have fought the good fight of faith, and finished their course. 3. Their employment, they cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. This may be understood either as an *hosannah*, wishing well to the interest of God and Christ in the church, and in the world, or as an *hallelujah*, giving to God and the Lamb the praise of the great salvation ; both the Father and the Son are joined together in these praises ; the Father he contrived this salvation, the Son purchased it ; and they that enjoy it, must and will bless the Lord and the Lamb ; and they will do it publicly, and with becoming fervour.

2. Here is the song of the angels, ver. 11, 12. where observe, 1. Their station, before the throne of God, attending on him, and about the saints, ready to serve them. 2. Their posture, which is very humble, and expressive of the greatest reverence, they fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God. Behold the most ex-

cellent of all the creatures, that never sinned, that are before him continually, not only covering their faces, but falling down on their faces before the Lord ! What humility then, and what profound reverence, becomes us vile, frail creatures, when we come into the presence of God ! We should fall down before him ; there should be both a reverential frame of spirit, and a humble behaviour, in all our addresses to God. 3. Their praises, they consented to the praises of the saints, said their *Amen* thereto ; there is in heaven a perfect harmony between the angels and saints ; and then they added more of their own, saying, Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. Where, 1. They acknowledge the glorious attributes of God, his wisdom, his power, and his might. 2. They declare that for these his divine perfections he ought to be blessed, and praised, and glorified to all eternity, and they confirm it by their *Amen*. We see what is the work of heaven, and we ought to begin it now, to get our hearts tuned for it, to be much in it, and long for that world, where our praises, as well as happiness, will be perfect.

13. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes ? and whence came they ? 14. And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. 15. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple : and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. 16. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters : and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Here we have a description of the honour and happiness of those that have faithfully served the Lord Jesus Christ, and suffered for him ; where observe, 1. A question asked by one of the elders, not for his own information, but for John's instruction ; ministers may learn from the people, especially from aged and experienced Christians ; the lowest saint in heaven knows more than the greatest apostle in the world ; now the question has two parts : (1.) What are these that are arrayed in white robes ? (2.) Whence came they ? It seems to be spoke by way of admiration, as Cant. iii. 6. Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness ! Faithful Christians deserve our notice and respect, we should mark the upright. 2. The answer returned by the apostle, in which he tacitly acknowledges his own ignorance, and sues to this elder for information, Thou knowest ; those that would gain knowledge, must not be ashamed to own their ignorance, nor to desire instruction from any that are able to give it. 3. The account given to the apostle concerning that noble army of martyrs that stood before the throne of God, with white robes, and palms of victory in their hands, and of them it is here observed, 1. The low and desolate state they had formerly been in, they had been in great tribulation, persecuted by men, tempted by Satan, sometimes troubled in their own spirits ; they had suffered the spoiling of their goods, the imprisonment of their persons, yea, the loss of life itself ; the way to heaven lies through many tribulations, but tribulation, how great soever, shall not separate us from the love of God : Tribulation, when gone through well, will make heaven more welcome, and more glorious. 2. The means by which they had been prepared for that great honour and happiness they now enjoyed, ver. 14. they had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is not the blood of the martyrs themselves, but the blood of the Lamb, that can wash away sin, and make the soul pure and clean in the sight of God ; other blood stains, this is the only blood that makes the robes of the saints white and clean. 3. The blessedness to which they are now advanced, being thus prepared for it : 1. They are happy in their station, for they are before the throne of God night and day, and he dwells among them ; they are in that presence, where there is fulness of joy. 2. They are happy in their employment, for they serve God continually, and that without weakness, drowsiness, or weariness ; heaven is a state of service, though not of suffering ; it is a state of rest, but not of sloth ; it is a praising, delightful rest. 3. They are happy in their freedom from all the inconveniencies of this present life ; (1.) From all want, and sense of want ; they hunger and thirst no more ; all their wants are supplied, and all the uneasiness caused thereby is removed. (2.) From all sickness and pain, they shall never be scorched by the heat of the sun any more. 4. They are happy in the love and conduct of the Lord Jesus, he shall feed them, he shall lead them to living fountains of waters, he shall put them into the possession of every thing that is pleasant and refreshing to their souls, and therefore they shall hunger and thirst no more. 5. They are happy in being delivered from all sorrow, or occasion of it, God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; they have formerly had their sorrows, and shed many tears, both upon the account of sin, and affliction ; but God himself, with his own gentle and gracious hand, will wipe those tears away, and they shall return no more for ever ; and they would not have been without those tears, when God comes to wipe them away ; in this

he deals with them as a tender father that finds his beloved child in tears, he comforts him, *he wipes his eyes*, and turns his sorrow into rejoicing; this should moderate the Christian's sorrow in his present state, and support him under all the troubles of it; for *they that sow in tears, shall reap in joy; and they that now go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.*

C H A P. VIII.

We have already seen what occurred upon opening six of the seals, we now come to the opening of the seventh, which introduced the sounding of the seven trumpets, and a direful scene now opens; most expositors agree, the seven seals represent the interval between the apostles time and the reign of Constantine, but the seven trumpets are designed to represent the rise of antichrist, some time after the empire became Christian: In this chapter we have the preface, or prelude, to the sounding of the trumpets, ver. 1,—7. 2. The sounding of four of the trumpets, ver. 7, &c.

1. **A**ND when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.
2. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.
3. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.
4. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God, out of the angels hand.
5. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth; and there were voices, and thundrings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.
6. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets, prepared themselves to sound.

In these verses we have the prelude to *the sounding of the trumpets* in several parts: 1. *The opening of the last seal*, this was to introduce a new set of prophetic iconisms and events, there is a continued chain of providence, one part linked to another, where one ends another begins, and though they may differ in nature and in time, they all make up one wise, well connected, and uniform design in the hand of God. 2. A profound *silence in heaven for the space of half an hour*, which may be understood either, (1.) Of the *silence of peace*, that for this time no complaints were sent up to the ear of the Lord God of sabbath, all was quiet and well in the church, and therefore all *silent in heaven*, for whenever the church on earth cries through oppression, that cry comes up to *heaven*, and resounds there; or, (2.) A *silence of expectation*; great things were upon the wheel of providence, and the church of God, both in *heaven and earth*, stood silent, as became them, to see what God was doing, according to that of *Zech. ii. 13. Be silent, O all flesh, before the Lord, for he is risen up out of his holy habitation.* And elsewhere, *Be still, and know that I am God.* 3. *The trumpets were delivered to the angels*, who were to *sound them*: Still the angels are employed as the wise and willing instruments of divine providence, and they are furnished with all their materials and instructions from God our Saviour: As *the angels of the churches* are to *sound the trumpet of the gospel*, *the angels of heaven* are to *sound the trumpet of providence*, and every one has his part given him. 4. To prepare for this, *another angel must first offer incense*, ver. 3. It is very probable, this *other angel* is the Lord Jesus, the High-priest of the church, who is here described in his sacerdotal office, having a *golden censer*, and *much incense*, a fullness of merit in his own glorious person, and this *incense* he was to *offer up with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar* of his divine nature. Observe, 1. *All the saints* are a praying people, none of the *children of God* are born dumb, a Spirit of grace is always a *Spirit of adoption* and supplication, *teaching us to cry, Abba, Father.* Psalm xxxii. 6. *For thus shall every one that is godly pray unto thee.* 2. Times of danger should be praying times, and so should times of great expectation; both our fears and our hopes should put us upon prayer; and where the interest of the church of God is deeply concerned, the hearts of the people of God in prayer should be greatly enlarged. 3. *The prayers of the saints* themselves stand in need of *the incense* and intercession of Christ to make them acceptable and effectual, and there is provision made by Christ for that purpose, he has his *incense*, his *censer*, and his *altar*; he is all himself to his people. 4. *The prayers of the saints* come up before God in a cloud of *incense*, no prayer thus recommended was ever denied audience and acceptance. 5. These prayers that were thus accepted in heaven, produced great changes upon earth in return to them; the same angel that in his *censer* offered up the *prayers of the saints*, in the same *censer* took of the *fire of the altar*, and cast it into the earth, and this presently caused strange commotions, *voices, and thundrings, and lightnings, and an earthquake*; these were the answers God gave to the *prayers of his saints*, and tokens of his anger against the world, and that he would do great things to avenge himself and his people of their enemies; and now all things being thus prepared, the angels discharge their duty.

7. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of the trees was burnt up, and all green

grasses was burnt up. 8. And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood: 9. And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. 10. And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters: 11. And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. 12. And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened; and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise. 13. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Wo, wo, wo to the inhabitants of the earth, by reason of the other voices of the trumpets of the three angels which are yet to sound.

Observe, 1. *The first angel sounded the first trumpet*, and the events which followed were very dismal, ver. 7. *there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, &c.* here was a terrible storm, but whether it is to be understood of a storm of heresies, a mixture of monstrous errors falling on the church (for in that age Arianism prevailed) or a storm and tempest of war falling on the civil state, expositors are not agreed: Mr. Mede takes it to be meant of the Gothick inundation that broke in upon the empire in the year 395, the same year that Theodosius died, when the northern nations under Alaricus, king of the Goths, brake in upon the western parts of the empire: However, here we observe, 1. That it was a very terrible storm, *fire, and hail, and blood*; a strange mixture! 2. The limitation of it, it fell on *the third part of the trees*, and on the third part of *the grasses*, and blasted and burnt it up; that is, say some, upon *the third part of the clergy*, and *the third part of the laity*; or, as others that take it to fall upon the civil state, upon *the third part of the great men*, and upon *the third part of the common people*; either upon the Roman empire itself, which was a third part of the then known world, or upon a third part of that empire; the most severe calamities have their bounds and limits set them by the great God.

2. *The second angel sounded*, and the alarm was followed, as in the first, with terrible events, ver. 8. *a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood.* By this *mountain* some understand the leader or leaders of the hereticks; others, as Mr. Mede, the city of Rome, which was five times sacked by the Goths and Vandals, within the compass of 137 years, first by Alaricus, in the year 410, with great slaughter and cruelty: In these calamities a *third part* of the people, called here *the sea*, or collection of waters, were destroyed; here was still a limitation to the third part, for *in the midst of judgment God remembers mercy*; this storm fell heavy upon the maritime and merchandizing cities and countries of the Roman empire.

3. *The third angel sounded*, and the alarm had the like effects as before, ver. 10. *there fell a great star from heaven, &c.* Some take this to be a political star, some eminent governor, and they apply it to Augustulus, who was forced to resign the empire to Odoacer, in the year 480. Others take it to be an ecclesiastical star, some eminent person in the church, compared to a *burning lamp*, and they fix it upon Pelagius, who proved about this time a falling star, and greatly corrupted the churches of Christ. Observe, 1. Where this star fell, *upon a third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of water*, ver. 10. 2. What effect it had upon them, it turned those springs and streams into *wormwood*, made them very bitter, that men were poisoned by them; either the laws, that are springs of civil liberty, and property, and safety, were poisoned by arbitrary power; or the doctrines of the gospel, the springs of spiritual life, refreshment, and vigour to the souls of men, were so corrupted, and imbibed, by a mixture of dangerous errors, that the souls of men found their ruin where they sought for their refreshment.

4. *The fourth angel sounded*, and the alarm was followed with further calamities. Observe, 1. The nature of this calamity, it was darkness; it fell therefore upon the great luminaries of the heaven that give light to the world, *the sun, and the moon, and the stars*; either the guides and governors of the church, or of the state, who are placed in higher orbs than the people, and are to dispense light and benign influences to them. 2. The limitation, it was confined to a *third part* of these luminaries; there was some light both of *the sun* by day, and of *the moon and stars* by night, but it was only a *third part* of what they had before. Without determining what is matter of controversy in these points among learned men, we rather choose to make these plain and practical remarks: 1. That where the gospel comes to a people, and is but coldly received, and has not its proper effects upon their hearts and lives, it is usually followed with dreadful judgments. 2. God gives warning to men of his judgments before he sends them; he uses to sound an alarm by the written word, by ministers, by mens own consciences, and by the signs of the times; so that if a people be surprized, it is their own fault. 3. That the anger of God against a people makes dreadful work among

among them, it embitters all their comforts, and makes even life itself bitter and burdensome. 4. That God does not in this world stir up all his wrath, but sets bounds to the most terrible judgments. 5. That corruption of doctrine and worship in the church, are themselves great judgments, and the usual causes and tokens of other judgments coming on a people. 6. And lastly, before the other three trumpets are sounded, here is solemn warning given to the world, how terrible the calamities would be that should follow them, and how miserable those times and places would be on which they fell, *ver. 13.* 1. The messenger was *an angel flying in the midst of heaven*, as in haste, and coming on an awful errand. 2. The message was a denunciation of farther and greater woe and misery than the world had hitherto endured; here are three woes, to shew how much the calamities coming should exceed those that had been already, or to hint how every one of the three succeeding trumpets should introduce its particular and distinct calamity. Observe, If lesser judgments do not take effect, but the church and the world grow worse under them, they must expect greater; and *God will be known by the judgments that he executes*; and he expects when he comes to punish the world, the inhabitants thereof should tremble before him.

C H A P. IX.

In this chapter we have an account of the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets, the appearances that attended them, and the events that were to follow; the fifth trumpet, ver. 1,—13. the sixth, ver. 13, &c.

1. **A**ND the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit. 2. And he opened the bottomless pit, and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened, by reason of the smoke of the pit. 3. And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth; and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4. And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. 5. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man. 6. And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them. 7. And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. 8. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. 9. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. 10. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. 11. And they had a king over them, *which is* the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon. 12. One woe is past, and behold there come two woes more hereafter.

Upon the sounding of this trumpet, the things to be observed are, 1. *A star falling down from heaven to the earth.* Some think this star represents some eminent bishop in the Christian church, some angel of the church; for in the same way of speaking by which pastors are called stars, the church is called heaven; but who this is, expositors do not agree: Some understand it of Boniface, the third bishop of Rome, who assumed the title of universal bishop, by the favour of the emperor Phocas, who being an usurper and tyrant in the state, allowed Boniface to be so in the church as the reward of his flattery. 2. *To this fallen star was given the key of the bottomless pit.* Having now ceased to be a minister of Christ, he becomes the antichrist, the minister of the devil; and by the permission of Christ, who had taken from him the keys of the church, he becomes the devil's turnkey, to let loose the powers of hell against the churches of Christ. 3. *Upon the opening of the bottomless pit there arose a great smoke,* which darkened the sun and the air. The devils are the powers of darkness, hell is the place of darkness. The devil carries on his designs by blinding the eyes of men, by extinguishing light and knowledge, and promoting ignorance and error; he first deceives men, and then destroys them; wretched souls follow him in the dark, or they durst not follow him. 4. Out of this dark smoke there came a swarm of locusts, one of the plagues of Egypt, the devils emissaries headed by antichrist, all the rout and rabble of antichristian orders, to promote superstition, idolatry, error, and cruelty; and these had, by the just permission of God, power to hurt those that had not the mark of God in their foreheads. 5. The hurt they were to do them was not a bodily but a spiritual hurt; they should not in a military way destroy all by fire and sword; the trees and the grass should be untouched, and those they hurt should not be slain; it should not be a persecution, but a secret poison and infection in their souls, which should rob them of their purity, and afterwards of their peace. He-

refy is a poison in the soul, working slowly and secretly, but will be bitterness in the end. 6. They had no power so much as to hurt those that had the seal of God in their foreheads; God's electing, effectual distinguishing grace will preserve his people from total and final apostasy. 7. The power given to these factors for hell is limited in point of time, five months, a certain season, and but a short season, though how short we cannot tell; gospel seasons have their limits, and times of seduction are limited too. 8. Though it would be short, it would be very sharp, inasmuch that those who were made to feel the malignity of this poison in their consciences, would be weary of their lives, *ver. 6. A wounded spirit who can bear?* 9. These locusts were of a monstrous size and shape, *ver. 7, 8, &c.* They were equipt for their work like horses prepared to battle. 1. They pretended to great authority, and seemed to be assured of victory. *They had crowns like gold on their heads*; it was not true, but a counterfeit authority. 2. They had the shew of wisdom and sagacity, *the faces of men*, though the spirit of devils. 3. They had all the allurements of seeming beauty to ensnare and defile the minds of men, *hair like women*; their way of worship was very gaudy and ornamental. 4. Though they appeared with the tenderness of women, they had *the teeth of lions*, were really cruel creatures. 5. They had the defence and protection of earthly powers, *breastplates of iron*. 6. They made a mighty noise in the world, they flew about from one country to another, and the noise of their motion was like that of an army with chariots and horses. 7. Though at first they soothed and flattered men with a fair appearance, there was a sting in their tails, the cup of their abominations contained that, which though luscious at first, would at length bite a serpent, and sting like an adder. 8. The king and commander of this hellish squadron is here described, 1. As an angel; so he was by nature, an angel, once one of the angels of heaven. 1. *The angel of the bottomless pit*; an angel still, but a fallen angel, fallen into the bottomless pit, vastly large, and out of which there is no recovery. 3. In these infernal regions he is a sort of prince and governor, and has the powers of darkness under his rule and command. 4. That his true name is Abaddon, Apollyon, a destroyer, for that is his business, his design, and employment, to which he diligently attends, in which he is very successful, and takes a horrid hellish pleasure; it is about this destroying work that he sends out his emissaries and armies, to destroy the souls of men. And now here we have the end of one woe, and where one ends, another begins.

13. And the six angels sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar, which is before God, 14. Saying to the six angels which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. 15. And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men. 16. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. 17. And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire, and smoke, and brimstone. 18. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. 19. For their power is in their mouths, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them do hurt. 20. And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues, yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: 21. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their forceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Here let us consider, the preface to this vision, and then the vision itself.

1. The preface of this vision, *ver. 13, 14. A voice was heard from the horns of the golden altar*; where observe, 1. That the power of the church's enemies is restrained till God gives the word to have them turned loose. 2. That when nations are ripe for punishment, those instruments of God's anger that were before restrained are now let loose upon them, *ver. 14.* 3. The instruments that God makes use of to punish a people, may sometimes lie at a great distance from them, so as that no danger may be apprehended from them. These four messengers of divine judgment lay bound in the river Euphrates, a great way from the European nations. Here the Turkish power had its rise, which seems to be the story of this vision.

2. The vision it self, *ver. 15, 16. And the four angels that had been bound in the great river Euphrates, were now loosed.* And here observe, 1. The time of their military operations and executions is limited to an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year. Prophetic characters of time are hardly to be understood by us; but in general the time is fixed to an hour, when it shall begin, and when it shall end; and how far the execution shall prevail, even to a third part of the inhabitants of the earth. God will make the wrath of man praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. 2. The army that

was to execute this great commission is mustered, and the number found to be of horsemen two hundred thousand thousand; but we are left to guess what the infantry must be: In general it tells us, the armies of the Mahometan empire should be vastly great; and so it is certain they were. 3. Their formidable equipage and appearance, *ver. 17.* As the horses were fierce, like lions, and eager to rush into the battle; so they that sat upon them were clad in bright and costly armour, with all the ensigns of martial courage, zeal, and resolution. 4. The vast havock and desolation that they made in the Roman empire, which was now become antichristian, a third part of them were killed; they went as far as their commission suffered them, and they could go no farther. 5. Their artillery by which they made such slaughter, which is described by *fire, smoke, and brimstone*, issuing out of the mouths of their horses, and the stings that were in their tails. It is Mr. Mede's opinion, that this is a prediction of great guns, those instruments of cruelty, which make such destruction; and observes, these were first used by the Turks at the siege of Constantinople, and being new and strange, were very terrible, and did great execution: However, here seems to be an allusion to what is mentioned in the former vision, that as antichrist had his forces of a spiritual nature, like scorpions poisoning the minds of men with error and idolatry; so the Turks, that were raised up to punish the antichristian apostasy, had their scorpions and their stings too, to hurt and kill their bodies, who had been the murderers of so many souls. 6. And lastly, Observe, the impenitency of the antichristian generation under these dreadful judgments, *ver. 20.* the rest of the men that were not killed, repented not, they still persisted in those sins for which God was so severely punishing them, which were, 1. Their idolatry; they would not cast away their images, though they could do them no good, *could neither see, nor hear, nor walk.* 2. Their murders, *ver. 21.* which they had committed upon the saints and servants of Christ. Popery is a bloody religion, and seems resolved to continue so. 3. Their forceries; they have their charms, and magic arts, and rites in exorcism and other things. 4. Their fornications; they allow both spiritual and carnal impurity, and promote it in themselves and others. 5. *Their thefts;* they have by unjust means heaped together a vast deal of wealth to the injury and impoverishing of families, cities, princes and nations. These are the flagrant crimes of antichrist and his agents; and though God has revealed his wrath from heaven against them, they are obstinate, hardened, and impenitent, and judicially so, for they must be destroyed. From this sixth trumpet learn, 1. That God can make one enemy of the church to be a scourge and plague to another. 2. That he who is the Lord of hosts, has vast armies at his command to serve his own purposes. 3. That the most formidable powers have limits set them, which they cannot transgress. 4. That when God's judgments are in the earth, he expects the inhabitants thereof should *repent of sin, and learn righteousness.* 5. That impenitency under divine judgments is an iniquity that will be the ruin of sinners; for where God judges he will overcome.

C H A P. X.

This chapter is an introduction to the latter part of the prophecies of this book. Whether what is contained between this and the sounding of the seventh trumpet, in chap. xi. ver. 15. be a distinct prophecy from the other, or only a more general account of some of the principal things included in the other, is disputed by our curious inquirers into these abstruse writings. However here we have, 1. A remarkable description of a very glorious angel with an open book in his hand, ver. 1, 2, 3. 2. An account of seven thunders which the apostle heard, as echoing to the voice of this angel, and communicating some discoveries, which the apostle was not yet allowed to write. 3. The solemn oath taken by him who had the book in his hand, ver. 5, 6, 7. 4. The charge given to the apostle, and observed by him, ver. 8,—11.

1. **A**ND I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. 2. And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth. 3. And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. 4. And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not. 5. And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea, and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, 6. And sware by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: 7. But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

Here we have an account of another vision the apostle was favoured with, between the sounding of the sixth trumpet and that of the seventh. And we observe,

1. The person that was principally concerned in communicating this discovery to John, an angel from heaven, *another mighty angel;* who is so set forth, as would induce one to think it could be no o-

ther than our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. 1. *He was clothed with a cloud;* he veils his glory, which is too great for mortality to behold; and he throws a veil upon his dispensations; *clouds and darkness are round about him.* 2. *A rainbow was upon his head;* he is always mindful of his covenant, and when his conduct is most mysterious, yet it is perfectly just and faithful. 3. *His face was as the sun,* all bright and full of lustre and majesty, *chap. i. 16.* 4. *His feet were as pillars of brass;* all his ways both of grace and providence are pure and steady.

2. His station and posture; *he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth;* to shew the absolute power and dominion he had over the world; *And he held in his hand a little book opened,* probably the same that was before sealed, but was now opened, and gradually fulfilled by him.

3. His awful voice, He cried aloud, *as when a lion roareth,* *ver. 3.* And his awful voice was echoed by *seven thunders,* seven solemn and terrible ways of discovering the mind of God.

4. The prohibition given to the apostle, that he should not publish, but conceal what he had learned from the seven thunders, *ver. 4.* The apostle was for preserving and publishing every thing he saw and heard in these visions, but the time was not yet come.

5. The solemn oath taken by this mighty angel. 1. The manner of his swearing, *he lift up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth for ever;* by himself, as God often has done; or by God as God, to whom he, as Lord, Redeemer, and ruler of the world, now appeals. 2. The matter of the oath, that *there shall be time no longer;* either, 1. That there shall be now no longer delay in fulfilling the predictions of this book, than till the last angel should sound, then every thing should be put into speedy execution, *the mystery of God shall be finished,* *ver. 7.* Or 2. That when this mystery of God is finished, time it self shall be no more; as is the measure of things that are in a mutable changing state; but all things shall be at length for ever fixed, and so time it self swallowed up in eternity.

8. And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go, and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea, and upon the earth. 9. And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. 10. And I took the little book out of the angels hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter. 11. And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

Here we have, 1. A strict charge given to the apostle, which was, 1. That he should go and take the little book out of the hands of that mighty angel mentioned before. This charge was given, not by the angel himself that stood upon the earth, but by the same voice from heaven that in the fourth verse had laid an injunction upon him not to write what he had discerned by the seven thunders.

2. To eat the book; this part of the charge was given by the angel himself, hinting to the apostle, that before he should publish what he had discovered, he must more thoroughly digest the predictions, and be in himself suitably affected with them.

2. An account of the taste and relish which this little book would have, when the apostle had taken it in; at first, while in his mouth, sweet. All persons feel a pleasure in looking into future events, and in having them foretold; and all good men love to receive a word from God, of what import soever it be. But, 2. when this book of prophecy was more thoroughly digested by the apostle, the contents would be bitter; these were things so awful and terrible, such grievous persecutions of the people of God, and such desolation made in the earth, that the foresight and foreknowledge of them would not be pleasant but painful to the mind of the apostle; thus was Ezekiel's prophecy to him, *chap. iii. 3.*

3. The apostle's discharge of the duty he was called to, *ver. 10.* He took the little book out of the angels hand, and ate it up, and he found the relish to be as was told him. 1. It becomes the servants of God to digest in their own souls the messages they bring to others in his name, and to be suitably affected therewith themselves. 2. It becomes them to deliver every message with which they are charged, whether it would be pleasing or displeasing to men. That which is least pleasing, may be most profitable; however, God's messengers must not keep back any part of the counsel of God.

4. The apostle is made to know, that this book of prophecy that he had now taken in, was not given him merely to gratify his own curiosity, or to affect him with pleasure or pain, but to be communicated by him to the world; here his prophetic commission seems to be renewed, and he is ordered to prepare for another embassy, to convey those declarations of the mind and will of God, which are of great importance, to all the world, and to the highest and greatest men in the world, and such should be read and recorded in many languages, and so it is; we have them in our language, and are all obliged to attend unto them, and humbly to enquire into the meaning of them, and firmly to believe that every thing shall have its accomplishment in the proper time; and when the prophecies are fulfilled, the sense and truth of them will appear, and the omniscience, power, and faithfulness of the great God will be adored.

C H A P. XI.

In this chapter we have an account, 1. Of the measuring reed given to the apostle to take the dimensions of the temple, ver. 1, 2. 2. Of the two witnesses of God, ver. 3,—14. 3. Of the sounding of the seventh trumpet, and what followed upon it, ver. 14, &c.

1. **A**ND there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. 2. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

This prophetic passage about measuring the temple, is a plain reference to what we find in Ezekiel's vision, *Ezek. xl. 3.* but how to understand either the one or the other, is not so easy; it should seem the design of measuring the temple in the former case, was in order to the rebuilding of it, and that with advantage; the design of this measure seems to be either, 1. For the preservation of it in those times of publick danger and calamity that are here foretold: Or, 2. For its trial, that it may be seen how far it agrees with the standard, or pattern in the mount: Or, 3. For its reformation, that what is redundant, deficient, or changed, may be regulated according to the true model. Observe,

1. How much was to be measured. 1. *The temple.* The gospel church in general; whether it be so built, so constituted as the gospel rule directs, whether it be too narrow, or too large; the door too wide, or too strait. 2. *The altar.* That which was the place of the most solemn acts of worship, may be put for religious worship in general; whether the church has the true altars; both as to substance and situation: as to substance, whether they take Christ for their altar, and lay down all their offerings there; and in situation, whether the altar be in *the holiest*; that is, whether they worship God in the *Spirit and in truth*. 3. The worshippers too must be measured, whether they make God's glory their end, and his word their rule, in all their acts of worship; and whether they come to God with suitable affections, and whether their *conversation be as becomes the gospel*,

2. What was not to be measured, *ver. 2.* and why it should be left out. 1. What was not to be measured; *the court which is without the temple, measure it not.* Some say Herod, in the additions made to the temple, built an outer court, and called it, *the court of the Gentiles.* Some tell us, Adrian built the city and an outer court, and called it, *Elia*, and gave it to the Gentiles. 2. Why was not the outer court mentioned? This was no part of the temple, according to the model either of Solomon, or Zerubbabel, and therefore God would have no regard to it. He would not mark it out for preservation, but as it was designed for the Gentiles, to bring pagan ceremonies and customs, and to annex them to the gospel churches, so Christ abandoned it to them, to be used as they pleased; and both that and the city were trodden under foot for a certain time; *forty and two months*: Which some would have to be the whole time of the reign of antichrist. They that worship in the outer court, are either such as worship in a false manner, or with hypocritical hearts; and these are rejected of God, and will be found among his enemies. From the whole observe, 1. God will have a temple and an altar in the world, till the end of time. 2. That he has a strict regard to this temple, and observes how every thing is managed in it. 3. Those that worship in the outer court, will be rejected; and only those that worship *within the veil* accepted. 4. *The holy city*, the visible church, is very much trampled upon in the world. But, 5. The desolations of the church are for a limited time, and for a short time, and she shall be delivered out of all her troubles.

3. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days clothed in sackcloth. 4. These are the two olive-trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. 5. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. 6. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophesy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues as often as they will. 7. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit, shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. 8. And their dead bodies shall lie in the streets of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9. And they of the people, and kindreds, and tongues, and nations, shall see their dead bodies three days and a half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. 10. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. 11. And after three days and a half, the Spirit of life from God entered into them: and they stood upon their feet, and

great fear fell upon them which saw them. 12. And they heard a great voice from heaven, saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them. 13. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

In this time of treading down, God has reserved to him his faithful witnesses that will not fail to attest the truth of his word and worship, and the excellency of his ways. Here observe, 1. The number of these witnesses; and it is but a small number, and yet it is sufficient. 1. It is but small; many will own and acknowledge Christ in times of prosperity, that will desert and deny him in times of persecution; one witness when the cause is upon trial, is worth many at other times. 2. It is a sufficient number; for in the mouth of two witnesses every cause shall be established. Christ sent out his disciples two by two to preach the gospel. Some think these two witnesses are Enoch and Elias, that are to return to the earth for a time. Others, the church of the believing Jews, and that of the Gentiles; it should rather seem they are God's eminent faithful ministers, that shall not only continue to profess the Christian religion, but to preach it in the worst of times. 2. The time of their prophesying, or bearing their testimony for Christ; *a thousand two hundred and threescore days.* That is, (as many think) to the period of the reign of antichrist; and if the beginning of that interval could be ascertained, this number of prophetic days, taking a day for a year, would give us a prospect when the end shall be. 3. Their habit, and posture; they prophesy in sackcloth, as those that are deeply affected with the low and distressed state of the churches and interest of Christ in the world. 4. How they were supported and supplied during the discharge of their great and hard work; they stood before the God of the whole earth, and he gave them power to prophesy. He made them to be like Zerubbabel and Joshua, the two olive trees and candlestick in the vision of Zechariah, *chap. iv. 3, &c.* God gave them the oil of holy zeal, and courage, and strength, and comfort; made them olive trees, and their lamps of profession were kept burning by the oil of inward gracious principles, which they received from God: They had not only oil in their lamps, but in their vessels; habits of spiritual life, light and zeal. 5. Their security and defence during the time of their prophesying, *ver. 5.* *If any attempted to hurt them, fire proceeded out of their mouths, and devoured them.* Some think this alludes to Elias his calling for fire from heaven, to consume the captains and their companies that came to seize him, *2 Kings i. 12.* God promised the prophet Jeremiah, *chap. v. 14.* *Behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people shall be wood, and it shall devour them.* By their praying, and preaching, and courage in suffering, they shall gall and wound the very hearts and consciences of many of their persecutors, that shall go away self-condemned, and be even terrors to themselves; like Pashur, at the words of the prophet Jeremiah, *chap. xx. 4.* They shall have that free access to God, and that interest in him, that at their prayers God will inflict plagues and judgments upon their enemies, as he did on Pharaoh, *turning their rivers into blood*; and restraining the dews of heaven, shutting heaven up, that no rain shall fall for many days, as he did at the prayers of Elias, *1 Kings xvii. 1.* God has ordained his arrows for the persecutors, and is often plaguing them while they are persecuting his people; they find it hard work to *kick against the pricks.* 6. The slaying of the witnesses, to make their testimony more strong; they must seal it with their blood. Here observe, 1. The time when they should be killed; *when they have finished their testimony.* They are immortal, they are invulnerable, till their work be done. Some think it ought to be rendred, *when they were about to finish their testimony*; when they had prophesied in sackcloth the greatest part of the 1260 years, then they should feel the last effect of antichristian malice. 2. The enemy that should overcome and slay them; *the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit.* Antichrist, the great instrument of the devil, he shall make war against them, not only with the arms of subtil and sophistical learning, but chiefly with open force and violence; and God would permit his enemies to prevail against his witnesses for a time. 3. The barbarous usage of these slain witnesses; the malice of their enemies was not satiated with their blood and death, but pursued even *their dead bodies.* 1. They would not allow them a quiet grave; their bodies were cast out in the open street, the high street of Babylon; or in the high road leading to the city. This city is spiritually called Sodom, for monstrous wickedness; and Egypt for idolatry and tyranny; and here Christ in his mystical body has suffered more than in any place in the world. 2. Their dead bodies were insulted by the inhabitants of the earth, and their death was a matter of mirth and joy to the antichristian world, *ver. 10.* They were glad to be rid of these witnesses, that by their doctrine and example had teased, terrified and tormented the consciences of their enemies; these spiritual weapons cut wicked men to the heart, and fill them with the greatest rage and malice against the faithful. 7. The resurrection of these witnesses, and the consequences thereof. Where, 1. The time of their rising again, after they had lain dead *three days and an half*, *ver. 11.* a short time in comparison of that in which they had prophesied. Here may be a reference to the resurrection

of Christ, who is *the resurrection and the life*. *Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise*. Or to the resurrection of Lazarus on the fourth day, when they thought it impossible. God's witnesses may be slain, but they shall rise again: Not in their persons, till the general resurrection; but in their successors: God will revive his work, when it seems to be dead in the world. 2. The power by which they were raised; *the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet*. God put not only life, but courage into them, God can make the dry bones to live; it is the Spirit of life from God that quickens dead souls, and shall quicken the dead bodies of his people, and his dying interest in the world. 3. The effect of this upon their enemies; *great fear fell upon them*. The reviving of God's work and witnesses will strike terror into the souls of his enemies. Where there is guilt, there is fear; and a persecuting spirit, though cruel, is not a courageous, but a cowardly spirit. Herod feared John the baptist. 8. The ascension of the witnesses into heaven, and the consequences thereof, *ver. 12, 13*. Observe, 1. Their ascension. By heaven we may understand, either some more eminent station in the church, the kingdom of grace in this world, or to an high place in the kingdom of glory above. The former seems to be the meaning; *they ascend to heaven in a cloud*, in a figurative, not in a literal sense, *and their enemies saw them*. It will be no small part of the punishment of persecutors, both in this world, and at the great day, that they shall see the faithful servants of God greatly honoured and advanced. To this honour they did not attempt to ascend, till God called them, and said, *come up hither*. The Lord's witnesses must wait for their advancement, both in the church, and in heaven, till God calls them; they must not be weary of suffering and service, nor too hastily grasp at the reward; but stay till their Master calls them, and then they may gladly ascend to him. 2. The consequences of their ascension; and that was a mighty shock and convulsion in the antichristian empire, and the fall of *a tenth part of the city*. Some refer this to the beginning of the reformation from popery; when many princes and states fell off from their subjection to Rome. This great work met with great opposition, all the western world felt a great concussion, and the antichristian interest received a great blow, and lost a great deal of ground and interest, 1. By the sword of war, which was then drawn, and many of those that fought under the banner of antichrist were slain by it. 2. By the sword of the Spirit; *the fear of God fell upon many*. They were convinced of their errors, superstition and idolatry; and by true repentance, and embracing the truth, *they gave glory to the God of heaven*. Thus when God's work and witnesses revive, the devil's work and witnesses fall before him.

14. The second wo is past, and behold, the third wo cometh quickly. 15. And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. 16. And the four and twenty elders which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, 17. Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. 18. And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great, and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth. 19. And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thundrings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

We have here the sounding of the seventh and last trumpet; which is ushered in by the usual warning and demand of attention; *the second wo is past, and behold, the third wo cometh quickly*. Then the seventh angel sounded: This had been suspended for some time, till the apostle had been made acquainted with some intervening occurrences, of very great moment, and worthy of his notice and observation. But what he before expected, he now heard; the seventh angel sounding: And here observe the effects and consequences of this trumpet thus sounded.

1. Here were loud and joyful acclamations of the saints and angels in heaven. Where observe, 1. The manner of their adorations: they rose from their seats, *and fell upon their faces, and worshipped God*; they did it with reverence and humility. 2. The matter of their adorations. 1. They thankfully recognize the right of our God and Saviour, to rule and reign over all the world, *ver. 15*. *The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ*. They were always so in title, both by creation and purchase. 2. They thankfully observe his actual possession of them, and reign over them, they give him thanks because he had taken to him his great power, asserted his rights, and exerted his power, and so turned title into possession. 3. They rejoice that this his reign shall never end; *he shall reign for ever and ever*; till all enemies be put under his feet; none shall ever wrest the scepter out of his hand.

2. Here were angry resentments in the world, at these just appear-

ances and actings of the power of God, *ver. 18*. *The nations were angry*; not only had been so, but were so still: Their hearts rose up against God, they met his wrath with their own anger; it was a time when God was taking a just revenge upon the enemies of his people, recompensing tribulation to them that had troubled them. It was a time, in which he was beginning to reward his peoples faithful services and sufferings; and their enemies could not bear it, they fretted against God, and so increased their guilt, and hastened their destruction.

3. Another consequence was the opening of the temple of God in heaven. Whereby may be meant, that here is now a more free communication between heaven and earth; prayer and praises more freely and frequently ascending, and graces and blessings plentifully descending: But it rather seems to intend, the church of God on earth, an heavenly temple. And it is an allusion to the various circumstances of things in the time of the first temple, under idolatrous and wicked princes, it was shut up and neglected; but under religious and reforming princes, it was opened and frequented: So during the power of antichrist the temple of God seemed to be shut up, and was so in a great degree; but now it was opened again: And at this opening of it, Observe, 1. What was seen there; *the ark of God's testimony*. This was in the holy of holies; in this ark the tables of the law were kept. As before Josiah's time the law of God had been lost, but was then found; so in the reign of antichrist, God's law was laid aside, and made void by their traditions and decrees; the scriptures were locked up from the people, and they must not look into these divine oracles; now they are opened, now they are brought to the views of all. This was an unspeakable and invaluable privilege; and this, *like the ark of the testament*, was a token of the presence of God returned to his people, and his favour towards them in Jesus Christ the propitiation.

2. What was heard and felt there; *Lightnings, voices, thundrings, an earthquake, and great hail*. The great blessing of the reformation was attended with very awful providences; and by terrible things, in righteousness God would answer those prayers that were presented in his holy temple now opened. All the great revolutions of the world are concerted in heaven, and are the answers of the prayers of the saints.

C H A P. XII.

It is generally agreed by the most learned expositors, that the narrative we have in this and the two following chapters, from the sounding of the seventh trumpet, to the opening of the vials, is not a prediction of things to come, but rather a recapitulation, and representation of things past; which as God would have the apostle to foresee while future, he would have him to review now they were past, that he might have a more perfect idea of them in his mind, and might observe the agreement between the prophecy, and that providence that is always fulfilling the scriptures. In this chapter we have an account of the contest between the church, and antichrist; the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent. 1. As it was begun in heaven; ver. 1, —14. 2. As it was carried on in the wilderness; ver. 14, &c.

1. **A**ND there appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: 2. And she being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. 3. And there appeared another wonder in heaven, and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads, and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his head. 4. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven; and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. 5. And she brought forth a man-child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. 6. And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days. 7. And there was war in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels: 8. And prevailed not, neither was there place found any more in heaven. 9. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. 10. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. 11. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Here we see that early prophecy eminently fulfilled, in which God said he would *put enmity between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent*, Gen. iii. 15. where you will observe,

(1.) The attempts of Satan and his agents to prevent the increase of the church, by devouring her offspring *as soon as it was born*; of this we have a very lively description, in the most proper images.

I. We

1. We see how the church is represented in this vision, 1. As a woman, the weaker part of the world, but the spouse of Christ, and the mother of the saints. 2. As clothed with the sun, the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ; having put on Christ, who is the sun of righteousness: She, by her relation to Christ, is invested with honourable rights and privileges, and shines in his rays. 3. As having the moon under her feet; that is, the world; she stands upon it, but lives above it; her heart and hope is not set upon sublunary things, but on the things that are in heaven, where her head is. 4. As having on her head a crown of twelve stars, that is, the doctrine of the gospel preached by the twelve apostles, which is a crown of glory to all true believers. 5. As in travail, crying out, and pained to be delivered; she was pregnant, and now in pain to bring forth an holy progeny to Christ; desirous that what was begun in the conviction of sinners, might end in their conversion; and when the children were brought to the birth, there might be strength to bring forth, and she might see of the travail of her soul.

2. How the grand enemy of the church is represented, 1. As a great red dragon; a dragon, for strength and terror; a red dragon, for fierceness and cruelty. 2. As having seven heads, that is, placed on seven hills, as Rome was; and therefore, it is probable, pagan Rome is here meant. 3. As having ten horns, divided into ten provinces, as the Roman empire was by Augustus Cæsar. 4. As having seven crowns upon his heads, which is after expounded to be seven kings, chap. xvii. 10. 5. As drawing with his tail a third part of the stars of heaven, and casting them down to the earth; turning the ministers and professors of the Christian religion out of their places and privileges, and making them as weak and useless as he could. 6. As standing before the woman, to devour her child as soon as it should be born; very vigilant to crush the Christian religion in its birth, and entirely to prevent the growth and continuance of it in the world.

(2.) The unsuccessfulness of these attempts against the church; for, 1. She was safely delivered of a man-child, ver. 5. by which some understand Christ, others Constantine; but others, with greater propriety, a race of true believers, strong and united, resembling Christ, and designed, under him, to rule the nations with a rod of iron; that is, shall judge the world, by their doctrine and lives now, and as assessors with Christ at the great day. 2. Care was taken of this child, it was caught up to God, and to his throne; that is, taken into his special, powerful, and immediate protection; the Christian religion has been, from its infancy, the special care of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. 3. Care was taken of the mother as well as of the child, ver. 6. She fled into the wilderness, a place prepared, both for her safety and sustenance; the church was in an obscure state, dispersed; and this proved her security, through the care of divine providence; this her obscure and private state was for a limited time, not to continue always.

(3.) The attempts of the dragon do not only prove unsuccessful against the church, but fatal to his own interests; for, upon his endeavour to devour the man-child, he engaged all the powers of heaven against him, ver. 7. There was war in heaven; heaven will espouse the quarrel of the church. Here observe, 1. The seat of this war, in heaven; in the church, which is the kingdom of heaven on earth; and under the care of heaven, and in the same interest. 2. The parties, Michael, and his angels, on one side; and the dragon, and his angels, on the other: Christ, the great angel of the covenant, and his faithful followers; and Satan, and all his instruments: This latter party would be much superior in number and outward strength to the other; but the strength of the church lies in having the Lord Jesus for the captain of their salvation.

3. The success of the battle; the dragon and his angels fought, and prevailed not; there was a great struggle on both sides, but the victory fell to Christ and his church, and the dragon and his angels were not only conquered, but cast out; the pagan idolatry, which was worshipping devils, was extirpated out of the empire, in the time of Constantine. 4. The triumphant song that was composed and used on this occasion, ver. 10, 11. where observe,

1. How the conqueror is adored; Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: Now God hath shewed himself to be a mighty God; now Christ hath shewed himself to be a strong and mighty Saviour; his own arm has brought salvation, and now his kingdom will be greatly enlarged and established: The salvation and strength of the church, is all to be ascribed to the king and head of the church.

2. How the conquered enemy is described; 1. By his malice; he was the accuser of the brethren, and accused them before their God night and day; he appeared before God as an adversary to the church, continually bringing in indictments and accusations against them, whether true or false; thus he accused Job, and thus he accused Joshua the high-priest, Zech. iii. 1. Though he hates the presence of God, yet he is willing to appear there to accuse the people of God: Let us therefore take heed that we give him no cause of accusation against us; and that when we have sinned, we presently go in before the Lord, and accuse and condemn ourselves, and commit our cause to Christ, as our advocate. 2. By his disappointment and defeat; he and all his accusations are cast out, the indictments quashed, and the accuser turned out of the court with just indignation.

3. How the victory was gained; the servants of God overcome Satan, 1. By the blood of the Lamb, as the meritorious cause; Christ, by dying, destroyed him that hath the power of death, that is, the de-

vil. 2. By the word of their testimony, as the great instrument of war; the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; by a resolute, powerful preaching the everlasting gospel, which is mighty, through God, to pull down strong holds; by their courage and patience in sufferings, they loved not their lives unto the death; when the love of life stood in competition with their loyalty to Christ, they loved not their lives so well, but they could give them up to death, could lay them down in Christ's cause; their love to their own lives was overcome by stronger affections of another nature; and this their courage and zeal helped to confound their enemies, and to convince many of the spectators, and to confirm the souls of the faithful, and so contributed greatly to this victory.

12. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Wo to the inhabitants of the earth, and of the sea: for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. 13. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child. 14. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place: where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. 15. And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood, after the woman; that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. 16. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth. 17. And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

We have here an account of this war, so happily finished in heaven, or in the church, as it was again renewed and carried on in the wilderness, the place to which the church was fled, and where she had been for some time secured, by the special care of her God and Saviour. Observe,

1. The warning given of that distress and calamity that should fall upon the inhabitants of the world in general, through the wrath and rage of the devil; for though his malice is chiefly bent against the servants of God, yet he is an enemy and hater of mankind as such; and being defeated in his designs against the church, he is resolved to give all the disturbance he can to the world in general, ver. 12. Wo to the inhabitants of the earth, and the sea; the rage of Satan grows so much the greater, as he is limited both in place and time; when he was confined to the wilderness, and had but a short time to reign there, he comes with the greater wrath.

2. His second attempt upon the church now in the wilderness; he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man-child, ver. 13. Observe,

1. The care that God had taken of his church, he had conveyed her, as on eagles wings, into a place of safety provided for her, where she was to continue for a certain space of time, couched in prophetic characters, taken from Dan. vii. 35.

2. The continual malice of the dragon against the church, her obscurity could not altogether protect her, the old subtil serpent, that at first lurked in paradise, now follows the church into the wilderness, and casts out a flood of water after her to carry her away; this is thought to be meant of a flood of error and heresy, which was breathed by Arius, Nestorius, Pelagius, and many more; by which the church of God was in danger of being overwhelmed and carried away; the church of God is in more danger from hereticks, than from persecutors; and heresies are as certainly from the devil, as open force and violence.

3. The seasonable help provided for the church in this dangerous juncture, ver. 16. The earth helped the woman, and opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood. Some think, we are to understand the swarms of Goths and Vandals that invaded the Roman empire, and found work for the Arian rulers, that otherwise would have been as furious persecutors as the pagan had been, and had exercised great cruelties already, but God opened a breach of war, and the flood was in a manner swallowed up thereby, and the church enjoyed some respite: God often sends the sword to avenge the quarrel of his covenant; and when men choose new gods, then there is danger of war in the gates; intestine broils and contentions often end in the invasions of a common enemy.

4. The devil, being thus defeated in his designs upon the universal church, now turns his rage against particular persons and places; his malice against the woman pushes him on to make war with the remnant of her seed. Some think, hereby are meant the Albigenes, that were first by Dioclesian driven up into barren and mountainous places, and afterward cruelly murdered by popish rage and power, for several generations; and for no other reason, but because they kept the commandments of God, and held the testimony of Jesus Christ: Their fidelity to God and Christ, both in doctrine, worship, and practice, was that which exposed them to the rage of Satan and his instruments, and will do so still, less or more, to the end of the world, when the last enemy shall be destroyed.

C H A P. XIII.

We have in this chapter a further discovery and description of the church's enemies, not other enemies than are mentioned before, but described after another manner, that the methods of their enmity may more fully appear; they are represented as two beasts; the first you have an account of, ver. 1.—11. the second, ver. 11, &c. By the first some understand Rome pagan, and by the second Rome papal; but others understand Rome papal to be represented by both these beasts; by the first in its secular power, by the second in its ecclesiastical.

1. **A**ND I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads, and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. 2. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. 3. And I saw one of his heads, as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. 4. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? 5. And there was given unto him a mouth, speaking great things, and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months. 6. And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. 7. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. 8. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. 9. If any man have an ear, let him hear. 10. He that leadeth into captivity, shall go into captivity: He that killeth with the sword, must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

We have here an account of the rise, figure, and progress of the first beast; and observe,

1. From what situation the apostle saw this monster; he seemed to himself to stand upon *the sea-shore*, though, it is probable, he was still in a rapture; but he took himself to be in *the island Patmos*, but whether in the body, or out of the body, he could not tell.

2. From whence this beast came, *out of the sea*; and yet, by the description of it, it should be more likely to be a land-monster; but the more monstrous every thing about it was, the more proper an emblem it would be to set forth the mystery of iniquity and tyranny.

3. What was the form and shape of this beast; it was for the most part like a leopard, but its feet were like the feet of a bear, and its mouth as the mouth of a lion, it had seven heads, and ten horns, and upon its heads the name of blasphemy; a most horrid, hideous monster! In some part of this description here seems to be an allusion to Daniel's vision of the four beasts, which represented the four monarchies, Dan. vii. 1, 2, 3, &c. one of those beasts was like a lion, another like a bear, and another like a leopard; this beast was a sort of composition of those three, with the fierceness, strength, and swiftness of them all; the seven heads, and the ten horns, seem to design its several powers; the ten crowns, its tributary princes; the word blasphemy on its forehead, proclaims its direct enmity and opposition to the glory of God, by promoting idolatry.

4. The source and spring of his authority, and that was the dragon, he gave him his power, and seat, and great authority; he was set up by the devil, and supported by him to do his work, and promote his interest; and he lent him all the assistance he could.

5. A dangerous wound given him, and yet unexpectedly healed, ver. 3. Some think, by this wounded head, we are to understand the abolishing of pagan idolatry; and, by the healing of the wound, the introducing the popish idolatry, the same in substance with the former, only in a new dress, and which as effectually answers the devil's design as that did.

6. The honour and worship paid to this infernal monster, *all the world wondered after the beast*, they all admired his power, and policy, and success, and they worshipped the dragon that gave power to the beast, and they worshipped the beast, they paid honour and subjection to the devil and his instruments, and thought there was no power able to withstand them; so great was the darkness, degeneracy, and the madness of the world!

7. How he exercised his infernal power and policy, he had a mouth, speaking great things, and blasphemies; he blasphemed God, the name of God, the tabernacle of God, and all them that dwell in heaven; and he made war with the saints, and overcame them, and gained a sort of universal empire in the world. Observe, 1. His malice was principally levelled at the God of heaven, and his heavenly attendance; at God, in making images of him that is invisible, and in worshipping them; at the tabernacle of God, that is, say some, at the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, in which God dwells as in a tabernacle; this is dishonoured by their doctrine of transub-

stantiation, that will not suffer his body to be a true body, and will put it into the power of every priest to prepare a body for Christ; and against them that dwell in heaven, the glorified saints, by putting them into the place of the pagan demons, and praying to them; which they are so far from being pleased with, that they truly judge themselves wronged and dishonoured by it; thus the malice of the devil shews itself against heaven, and the blessed inhabitants of heaven; these are above the reach of his power, all he can do is to blaspheme them; but the saints on earth are more exposed to his cruelty, and he sometimes is permitted to triumph over them, and trample upon them.

8. The limitation of the devil's power and success, and that both as to time and persons. 1. He is limited in point of time, his reign is to continue forty and two months, ver. 5. suitable to the other prophetic characters of the reign of antichrist. 2. He is limited as to the persons and people that he shall entirely subject to his will and power; it will be only those whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life: Christ had a chosen remnant redeemed by his blood, recorded in his book, sealed by his Spirit; and though the devil and antichrist might overcome their bodily strength, and take away the natural life, they could never conquer their souls, nor prevail with them to forsake their Saviour, and revolt to his enemies.

9. Here is a demand of attention to what is here discovered of the great sufferings and troubles of the church, and an assurance given, that when God has accomplished his work on mount Sion, his refining work, then he will turn his hand against the enemies of his people, and they that have killed with the sword, shall themselves fall by the sword, ver. 10. and they that led the people of God into captivity, shall themselves be made captives: And here now is that which will be proper exercise for the patience and faith of the saints; patience under the prospect of so great sufferings, and faith in the prospect of so glorious a deliverance.

11. And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth, and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. 12. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth, and them which dwell therein, to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 13. And he doth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth, in the sight of men, 14. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth, by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast, saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast which had the wound by a sword, and did live. 15. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast, should be killed. 16. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17. And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. 18. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.

Those that think the first beast signifies Rome pagan, by this second beast would understand Rome papal, that does promote idolatry and tyranny, but in a more soft and lamb-like manner; those that understand the first beast of the secular power of the papacy, take the second to intend its spiritual and ecclesiastical powers, which act under the disguise of religion and charity to the souls of men. Here observe,

1. The form and shape of this second beast, he had two horns like a lamb, but a mouth that spake like the dragon; all agree this must be some great impostor, that, under a pretence of religion, shall deceive the souls of men; the papists would have it to be Apollonius Tyanaeus, but Dr. More has rejected that opinion, and fixes it upon the ecclesiastical powers of the papacy; the pope shews the horns of a lamb, pretends to be the vicar of Christ upon earth, and so to be vested with his power and authority; but his speech bewrays him; for he gives forth those false doctrines, and cruel decrees, as shew him to belong to the dragon, and not to the Lamb.

2. The power which he exerciseth, all the power of the former beast, ver. 12. he promotes the same interest, pursues the same design in substance, which is, to draw men off from worshipping the true God, to worship those that by nature are no gods, and subject the souls and consciences of men to the will and authority of men, in opposition to the will of God; this design is promoted by popery, as well as by paganism, and by the crafty arts of popery, as well as by the secular arm, both serving the interests of the devil, though in a different manner.

3. The methods by which this second beast carried on his interests and designs, and they are of three sorts; 1. Lying wonders, pretended miracles, by which they should be deceived, and prevailed with to worship the former beast in this new image or shape that was now made for him; they would pretend to bring down fire from heaven, as Elias did; and God sometimes permits his enemies, as he did the magi-

magicians of Egypt; to do things that seem very wonderful; and by which unwary persons may be deluded; it is well known the papal kingdom has been long supported by pretended miracles. 2. Excommunications, anathemas, severe censures, by which they pretend to cut men off from Christ, and cast them into the power of the devil, but do indeed deliver them over to the secular power, that they may be put to death; and thus, notwithstanding their vile hypocrisy, they are justly charged with killing those that they cannot corrupt. 3. By disfranchisement, allowing none to enjoy natural, civil, or municipal rights, that will not worship that papal beast, that is, the image of the pagan beast; it is made a qualification for buying and selling the rights of nature, as well as for places of profit and trust, that they have *the mark of the beast in their forehead, and in their right hand*; and that they have *the name of the beast, and the number of his name*; it is probable, *the mark, the name, and the number of the beast*, may all signify the same thing, that they make an open profession of their subjection and obedience to the papacy, which is *receiving the mark in their forehead*, and that they oblige themselves to use all their interest, power, and endeavour, to promote the papal authority, which is *receiving the mark in their right hands*. We are told pope Martyn V. in his bull added to the council of Constance, prohibits Roman catholics to suffer any hereticks to dwell in their countries, or to make any bargains, use any trades, or bear any civil offices; which is a very clear interpretation of this prophecy.

4. We have here *the number of the beast*, in such a manner given, as shews the infinite wisdom of God, and will sufficiently exercise all the wisdom and accuracy of men; *the number is the number of a man*, computed after the usual manner among men, and it is 666; whether this be the number of the errors and heresies that are contained in popery, or rather, as others, the number of the years from its rise to its fall, is not certain, much less what that period is, which is described by these prophetick numbers; the most admired dissertation on this intricate subject, is that of Dr. Potter, where the curious may find sufficient entertainment; it seems to me to be one of those seasons which God has reserved in his own power; only this we know, God has written *Mene Tekel* upon all his enemies; he has numbered their days, and they shall be finished, but his own kingdom shall endure for ever.

C H A P. XIV.

After an account of the great trials and sufferings which the servants of God had endured, we have now a more pleasant scene opening, the day begins now to dawn; and here we have represented, 1. The Lord Jesus at the head of his faithful followers, ver. 1,—6. 2. Three angels sent successively to proclaim the fall of Babylon, and the things antecedent and consequent to so great an event, ver. 6,—14. 3. The vision of the harvest, ver. 14, &c.

1. **A**ND I looked, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Fathers name written in their foreheads. 2. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: 3. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. 4. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins: these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; these were redeemed from among men, *being the first-fruits unto God, and to the Lamb*. 5. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Here we have one of the most pleasant sights that can be viewed in this world, the Lord Jesus Christ at the head of his faithful adherents and attendants. Where observe,

1. How Christ appears; *as a Lamb standing upon mount Sion*. Mount Sion is the gospel church; Christ is with his church, and in the midst of her in all her troubles, and therefore she is not consumed: It is his presence that secures her perseverance; he appears as *a Lamb, a true Lamb, the Lamb of God*; there was a counterfeit lamb rose out of *the earth* in the last chapter, but was really a dragon; here Christ appears as *the true paschal Lamb*, to shew that his mediatorial government is the fruit of his sufferings, and the cause of his peoples safety and fidelity.

2. How his people appear; very honourably: 1. As to the numbers, they are many, even all that were sealed; not one of them lost in all the tribulations through which they had gone. 2. Their distinguishing badge, they had *the name of God written in their foreheads*, they made a bold and open profession of their faith in God and Christ, and this being followed by suitable actions, they are known and approved. 3. Their congratulations and songs of praise, which were peculiar to the *redeemed*, ver. 3. their praises were loud as *the thunder*, or as *the voice of many waters*; they were melodious, as of harpers; they were heavenly, *before the throne of God*; *the song was new*, suited to the new covenant, and unto that new and gracious dispensation of providence under which they now were, and

their song was a secret to others, *strangers intermeddled not with their joy*; others might repeat the words of *the song*, but they were strangers to the true sense and spirit of it. 4. Their character and description: 1. They are described by their chastity and purity, *they were virgins, they had not defiled themselves either with corporal or spiritual adultery*, they had kept themselves clean from the abominations of the antichristian generation. 2. By their loyalty and steadfast adherence to Christ, *they follow the Lamb whithersoever he goes; they follow the conduct of his word, Spirit, and providence*, leaving it to him to lead them into what duties and difficulties he pleases. 3. By their former designation to this honour, *these were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits to God, and to the Lamb*, ver. 4. Here is plain evidence of a special redemption, *they were redeemed from among men*; some of the children of men are, by redeeming mercy, distinguished from others; *they were the first-fruits to God, and to the Lamb*, his choice ones, eminent in every grace, and the earnest of many more that should be *followers of them, as they were of Christ*. 4. By their universal integrity and conscientiousness, *there was no guile found in them, and they were without fault before the throne of God*; *they were without any prevailing guile, any allowed fault, their hearts were right with God*; and as for their human infirmities, they were freely pardoned in Christ; this is the happy remnant who attend upon the Lord Jesus as their Head and Lord, he is glorified in them, and they in him.

6. And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. 7. Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. 8. And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city; because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. 9. And the third angel said unto them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive *his mark* in his forehead, or in his hand, 10. The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture, into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone, in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: 11. And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name. 12. Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

In this part of the chapter we have three angels or messengers sent from heaven, to give notice of the fall of Babylon, and of those things that were antecedent and consequent to that great event.

1. The first angel was sent on an errand antecedent to it, and that was, *to preach the everlasting gospel*, ver. 6, 7. Observe, 1. *The gospel is an everlasting gospel*, it is so in its nature, and shall be so in its consequences; *though all flesh be grass, the word of the Lord endureth for ever*. 2. It is a work fit for an angel to preach *this everlasting gospel*; such is the dignity, and such the difficulty of that work; and yet we have this treasure in earthen vessels. 3. That *the everlasting gospel* is of great concern to all the world, and, as it is the concern of all, it is very much to be desired that it should be made known to all, even to *every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people*. 4. That *the gospel* is the great means whereby men are brought to *fear God, and to give glory to him*: Natural religion is not sufficient to keep up *the fear of God*, nor to secure *to him glory* from men; it is *the gospel* that revives *the fear of God*, and retrieves *his glory* in the world. 5. When idolatry creeps into the churches of God, it is by *the preaching of the gospel*, attended by the power of the holy Spirit, that men are turned from idols to serve the living God, as the Creator of *the heaven, and the earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters*, ver. 7. to worship any God besides him that created the world is idolatry.

2. The second angel follows the other, and proclaims the actual fall of Babylon; *the preaching of the everlasting gospel* had shaken the foundations of antichristianism in the world, and hastened its downfall; by Babylon is generally understood Rome, which was before called Sodom and Egypt, for wickedness and cruelty; and is now first called Babylon, for her pride and idolatry. Observe, 1. What God has foreordained and foretold shall be done as certainly as if it were done already. 2. The greatness of the papal Babylon will not be able to prevent her fall, but will make it more dreadful and remarkable. 3. The wickedness of Babylon, in corrupting, debauching, and intoxicating the nations round about her, will make her fall just, and will declare the righteousness of God in her utter ruin, ver. 8. her crimes are recited as the just cause of her destruction.

3. A third angel follows the other two, and gives warning to all of that divine vengeance which would overtake all those that obstinately adhered to the antichristian interest after God had thus proclaimed its downfall, ver. 9, 10. If after this (this threatening denounced against Babylon, and in part already executed) any should persist in their idolatry, professing subjection to *the beast*, and pro-

moting his cause, they must expect to drink deep of the wine of the wrath of God, they shall be for ever miserable in soul and body, Jesus Christ shall inflict this punishment upon them, and the holy angels shall behold it, and approve of it; idolatry, both papal and papist, is a damning sin in its own nature, and will prove fatal to those that persist in it, after fair warning given by the word of providence; they that refuse to come out of Babylon when thus called, and resolve to partake of her sins, must receive of her plagues; and the guilt and ruin of such incorrigible idolaters, will serve to set forth the excellency of the patience and obedience of the saints; these graces shall be rewarded with salvation and glory; when the treachery and rebellion of others shall be punished with everlasting destruction, then it will be said, to the honour of the faithful at ver. 12. *Here is the patience of the saints*; you have before seen their patience exercised, now you see it rewarded.

13. And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. 14. And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat, like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. 15. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. 16. And he that sat on the cloud, thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped. 17. And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he having also a sharp sickle. 18. And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. 19. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. 20. And the wine-press was troden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press, even unto the horse-bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

Here we have the vision of the harvest and vintage, introduced with a solemn preface. Observe,

1. The preface, ver. 13. where note, 1. From whence this prophecy about the harvest came, it came down from heaven, and not from men, and therefore it is of certain truth, and great authority. 2. How it was to be preserved and published, by writing; it was to be matter of record, that the people of God might have recourse to it for their support and comfort upon all occasions. 3. What it principally intended, and that is, to shew the blessedness of all the faithful saints and servants of God, both in death and after death; *Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth*, &c. where observe, 1. The description of those that are and shall be blessed, such as die in the Lord, either die in the cause of Christ, or rather die in a state of vital union with Christ, that are found in Christ when death comes. 2. The demonstration of their blessedness, *they rest from their labours, and their works follow them*. 1. They are blessed in their rest, *they rest from all sin, temptation, sorrow, and persecution; there the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest*. 2. They are blessed in their recompence, *their works follow them*; they do not go before them as their title, or price of purchase, but follow them as their evidence of having lived and died in the Lord, and the memory of them will be pleasant, and the reward glorious, far above the merit of all their services and sufferings. 3. They are happy in the time of their dying, when they have lived to see the cause of God reviving, the peace of the church returning, and the wrath of God falling upon their idolatrous, cruel enemies; such times are good times to die in; they have Simeon's desire; *Now, Lord, lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation*. And all this is ratified and confirmed by the testimony of the Spirit witnessing with their spirits, and with the written word.

2. We have the vision itself, represented by an harvest and a vintage.

1. By an harvest, ver. 14, 15. an emblem that sometimes signifies the cutting down of the wicked, when ripe for ruin, by the judgments of God; and sometimes the gathering in of the righteous, when ripe for heaven, by the mercy of God: This seems rather to represent God's judgments against the wicked; and here observe, (1.) The Lord of the harvest, one so like unto the Son of man, that he was the same, even the Lord Jesus, who is described, 1. By the chariot in which he sat, *a white cloud*, a cloud that had a bright side turned to the church, how dark soever it might be to the wicked. 2. By the ensign of his power, *on his head was a golden crown*, authority to do all that he did, and whatsoever he would do. 3. By the instrument of his providence, *in his hand a sharp sickle*. 4. By the solicitations he had from the temple to perform this great work; what he did he was desired to do by his people; and though he was resolved to do it, he would *for this thing be sought unto by them*, and

so it should be in return to their prayers. (2.) Observe the harvest-work, which is, to *thrust the sickle* into the corn, and *reap* the field; the sickle is the sword of God's justice, the field is the world, *reaping* is cutting the inhabitants of the earth down, and carrying them off. (3.) The harvest time, and that was when the corn is ripe, when the measure of the sins of men is filled up, and they are ripe for destruction; the most inveterate enemies of Christ and his church are not destroyed, till, by their sin, they are ripe for ruin, and then he will spare them no longer; he will *thrust in his sickle*, and the earth shall be reaped.

2. A vintage, ver. 17. Some think, these two are only different emblems of the same judgment; others, that they refer to distinct events of providence before the end of all things. Observe, 1. To whom this vintage-work was committed, to an angel, another angel that came out from the altar, that is, from the holiest of all in heaven. 2. At whose request this vintage-work was undertaken; and it was, as before, at the cry of an angel out of the temple, the ministers and churches of God on earth. 3. The work of the vintage, which consists of two parts, (1.) The cutting off, and gathering the clusters of the vine, which were now ripe and ready, fully ripe, ver. 18. (2.) Casting these grapes into the wine-press, ver. 19. and here we are told, 1. What was the wine-press, it was the wrath of God; the fire of his indignation, some terrible calamity, very probably the sword, shedding the blood of the wicked. 2. Where was the place of the wine-press, without the city, where the army lay that came against Babylon. 3. The quantity of the wine, that is, of the blood that was drawn forth by this judgment; it was for depth up to the horses' bridles, and for breadth and length a thousand and six hundred furlongs, ver. 20. that is, say some, 200 Italian miles, which is thought to be the measure of the holy land, and may be meant of the patrimony of the holy see, encompassing the city of Rome; but here we are left to doubtful conjectures; perhaps, this great event has not yet had its accomplishment, but the vision is for an appointed time; and therefore, though it may seem to tarry, we are to wait for it: *But who shall live when the Lord does this?*

CHAP. XV.

Hitherto, according to the judgment of very eminent expositors, God had represented to his servant John, 1. The state of the church under the pagan powers, in the six seals opened; and then, 2. The state of the church under the papal powers, in the vision of the six trumpets that began to sound upon the opening of the seventh seal: 3. And then is inserted a more general and brief account of the past, present, and future state of the church, in the little book, &c. He now proceeds, 4. To shew him how antichrist should be destroyed, by what steps that destruction should be accomplished, in the vision of the seven vials. This chapter contains an awful introduction or preparation for the pouring out of the vials; in which we have, 1. A sight of those angels in heaven that were to have the execution of this great work, and with what acclamations of joy the heavenly hosts applauded the great design, ver. 1.—5. 2. A sight of those angels coming out of heaven to receive those vials which they were to pour out, and the great commotions that this caused in the world, ver. 5, &c.

1. AND I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels, having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. 2. And I saw as it were a sea of glass, mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. 3. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. 4. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

Here we have the preparation of matters for the pouring out of the seven vials, which was committed to seven angels; and observe,

How these angels appeared to the apostle, in heaven; it was in a wonderful manner, and that upon the account, 1. Of the work they had to do, and that was, to finish the destruction of antichrist; God was now about to pour out his seven last plagues upon that interest, and, as the measure of Babylon's sins was filled up, they should now find the full measure of his vindictive wrath. 2. The spectators and witnesses of this their commission, all that had gotten the victory over the beast, &c. these stood on a sea of glass, representing this world, as some think, a brittle thing, that shall be broken to pieces; or, as others, the gospel covenant, alluding to the brazen sea in the temple, in which the priests were to wash; the faithful servants of God stand upon the foundation of the righteousness of Christ; or, as others, the Red sea, that stood as it were congealed while the Israelites went through; and the pillar of fire reflecting light upon the waters, they would seem to have fire mingled with them; and this to shew, that the fire of God's wrath against Pharaoh and his horses, should dissolve the congealed waters, and destroy them thereby; to which there seems to be an allusion, by their singing the song of Moses; in which, 1. They extol the greatness of God's works, and the justice and truth of his ways, both in deliver-

ing his people, and destroying their enemies; *they rejoiced in hope*, and the near prospect they had of this, though it was not yet accomplished. 2. They call upon all nations to render unto God that fear, glory, and worship, which was due to such a discovery of his truth and justice, *ver. 4. Who shall not fear thee?*

5. And after that, I looked, and behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: 6. And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles, 7. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels, seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. 8. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

Observe, 1. How these angels appeared, coming out of heaven to execute their commission, *ver. 5. The temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened.* Here is an allusion to the holiest of all in the tabernacle and temple, where was the mercy-seat, covering the ark of the testimony, where the high-priest made intercession, and God communed with his people, and heard their prayers. Now by this, as it is here mentioned, we may understand, 1. That in the judgments God was now about to execute upon the antichristian interest, he was fulfilling the prophecies and promises of his word and covenant, which was there always before him, and of which he was ever mindful. 2. That in this work he was answering the prayers of the people, which were offered to him by their great High-priest. 3. That he was herein avenging the quarrel of his own Son, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, whose offices and authority had been usurped, his name dishonoured, and the great designs of his death opposed by antichrist, and his adherents. 4. That he was opening a wider door of liberty for his people to worship him in numerous, solemn assemblies without the fear of their enemies.

2. How they were equipped and prepared for their work; where observe, 1. Their array, they were clothed with pure and white linen, and had their breasts girded with golden girdles, *ver. 6.* This was the habit of the high-priests when they went in to enquire of God, and came out with an answer from him; this shewed these angels were acting in all things under the divine appointment and direction, and that they were going to prepare a sacrifice to the Lord, called the supper of the great God, chap. xix. 17. The angels are the ministers of divine justice, and they do every thing in a pure and holy manner. 2. Their artillery, what it was, and from whence they receive it; their artillery, by which they were to do this great execution, was, seven vials filled with the wrath of God; they were armed with the wrath of God against his enemies; the meanest creature, when it comes armed with the anger of God, will be too hard for any man in the world; but much more an angel of God: This wrath of God was not to be poured out all at once, but was divided into seven parts, which should successively fall upon the antichristian party. Now from whence did the angels receive these vials? From one of the four living creatures, one of the ministers of the true church, that is, in answer to the prayers of the ministers and people of God, and to avenge their cause, in which the angels are willingly employed.

3. The impressions these things made upon all that stood near the temple, they were all as it were wrapt up in clouds of smoke, which filled the temple, from the glorious and powerful presence of God; so that no man was able to enter into the temple, till the work was finished: The interests of antichrist were so interwoven with the civil interests of the nations, that he could not be destroyed without giving a great shock to all the world; and the people of God would have but little rest and leisure to assemble themselves before him, while this great work was a doing; for the present their sabbaths would be interrupted, ordinances of publick worship intermitted, and all thrown into a general confusion; God himself was now preaching to the church, and to all the world, by terrible things, in righteousness; but when this work was done, then the churches would have rest, the temple would be opened, and the solemn assemblies gathered, edified, and multiplied; the greatest deliverances of the church are brought about by awful and astonishing steps of providence.

C H A P. XVI.

In this chapter we have an account of the pouring forth of these vials that were filled with the wrath of God, and they were poured out upon the whole antichristian empire, and on every thing appertaining to it: 1. Upon the earth, *ver. 2. then,* 2. Upon the sea, *ver. 3.* 3. Upon the rivers and fountains of waters, *ver. 4.* Upon which there the heavenly hosts proclaim and applaud the righteousness of the judgments of God. 4. The fourth vial was poured out on the sun, *ver. 8.* the fifth on the seat of the beast; the sixth on the river Euphrates; the seventh in the air, upon which the city of the nations fell, and great Babylon came in remembrance before God.

AND I heard a great voice out of the temple, saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. 2. And the

first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisom and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image. 3. And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea. 4. And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. 5. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus: 6. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. 7. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

We had in the foregoing chapter the great and solemn preparation that was made for the pouring out of the vials; now we have the performance of that work. Where observe, 1. That though every thing was made ready before, yet nothing was to be put in execution without an immediate positive order from God; and this he gave out of the temple, answering the prayers of his people, and avenging their quarrel.

2. No sooner was the word of command given, but it was immediately obeyed; no delay, no objection made. We find some of the best of men, as Moses and Jeremiah, did not so readily come in and comply with the call of God to their work; but the angels of God not only excel in strength, but in a readiness to do the will of God. God says, *go your ways, and pour out the vials*, and immediately the work is begun. We are taught to pray, that the will of God may be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

And now we enter upon a series of very terrible dispensations of providence; of which it is difficult to give the certain meaning, or to make the particular application. But in the general it is worth our observation,

1. That here is a reference and allusion to several of the plagues of Egypt, such as the turning their waters into blood, smiting them with boils and sores. Their sins were alike, and so were their punishments.

2. These vials have a plain reference to the seven trumpets, which represented the rise of antichrist; and we learn hence, that the fall of the churches enemies shall bear some resemblance to their rise; and that God can bring them down in such ways as they chose to exalt themselves. And the fall of antichrist shall be gradual; as Rome was not built in one day, so neither shall it fall in one day, but it falls by degrees; it shall fall so as to rise no more.

3. The fall of the antichristian interest should be universal. Every thing that any ways belonged to them, or could be serviceable to them, the premisses, and all their appurtenances, are put into the writ for destruction; their earth, their air, their sea, their rivers, their cities, all consigned over to ruin, all accursed for the sake of the wickedness of that people. Thus the creation groans and suffers through the sins of men. Now we proceed to,

1. The first angel who poured out his vial, *ver. 2.* and observe, 1. Where it fell, upon the earth, that is, say some, upon the common people; others, upon the body of the Romish clergy, that were the basis of the papacy, and of an earthly spirit, all carrying on earthly designs. 2. What it produced, noisom and grievous sores on all that had the mark of the beast. They had marked themselves by their sin, now God marks them out by his judgments. This sore, some think, signifies some of the first appearances of providence against their state and interest, which gave them great uneasiness, as it discovered their inward distemper, and was a token of farther evil; the plague tokens appeared.

2. The second angel poured out his vial; and here we see, 1. Where it fell, upon the sea; that is, say some, upon the jurisdiction and dominion of the papacy; others, upon the whole system of their religion, their false doctrines, corrupt glosses, their superstitious rites, their idolatrous worship, their pardons, indulgences, a great conflux of wicked inventions and institutions, by which they maintain a trade and traffick advantageous to themselves, but injurious to all that deal with them. 2. What it produced; it turned the sea into blood, as the blood of a dead man, and every living soul died in the sea. God discovered not only the vanity and falshood of their religion, but the pernicious and deadly nature of it, that the souls of men were poisoned by that which was pretended to be the sure means of their salvation.

3. The next angel poured out his vial, and we are told, 1. Where that fell, upon the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters. That is, say some very learned men, upon their emissaries, and especially the Jesuits, who like streams conveyed the venom and poison of their errors and idolatries from the spring-head, through the earth. 2. What effect it had upon them, it turned them into blood; some think, it stirred up Christian princes to take a just revenge upon them that had been the great incendiaries of the world, and had occasioned the shedding of the blood of armies, and of martyrs; and the following doxology favours this sense, *ver. 5, 6.* Wherein the instrument that God makes use of in this work is called the angel of the waters, who extols the righteousness of God in this retaliation, they have shed the blood of thy saints, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy; to which another angel answered by full consent, *ver. 7.*

8. And

8. And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. 9. And men were scorched with a great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory. 10. And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain, 11. And blasphemed the God of heaven, because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

In these verses we see the work going on in the appointed order. The

4th Angel poured out his vial, and that fell upon the sun; that is, say some, upon some eminent prince of popish communion that should renounce their false religion a little while before its utter downfall; and some expect it will be the German emperor. And now what will be the consequence of this. That sun which before cherished them with warm and benign influences, shall now grow hot against these idolaters, and shall scorch them. Princes shall use their power and authority to suppress them; which yet would be so far from bringing them to repentance, that it should cause them to curse God and their king, and look upward, throwing out their blasphemous speeches against the God of heaven; they were hardened to their ruin. The

5th Angel poured out his vial, *ver.* 10. And observe, 1. where that fell, *upon the seat of the beast*; upon Rome it self, the mystical Babylon, the head of the antichristian empire. 2. What effect it had there; the whole kingdom of the beast *was full of darkness* and distress; from that very city which was the seat of their policy, the source of all their learning, and all their knowledge, and all their pomp and pleasure, it now becomes a source of darkness and pain, and anguish. Darkness was one of the plagues of Egypt, and it is opposed to lustre and honour, and so forebodes the contempt and scorn to which the antichristian interest should be exposed. Darkness is opposed to wisdom and penetration, and forebodes the confusion and folly which the idolaters should discover at that time. It is opposed to pleasure and joy, and so signifies their anguish and vexation of spirit, when their calamities thus came upon them.

12. And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. 13. And I saw three unclean spirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth, and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God almighty. 15. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. 16. And he gathered them together into a place, called in the Hebrew tongue, Armageddon.

6. *The sixth angel poured out his vial*, and observe, 1. where it fell, *upon the great river Euphrates*. Some take it literally, for the place where the Turkish power and empire begun; and they think this is a prophecy of the destruction of the Turkish monarchy and idolatry, which they think will be effected about the same time with that of the papacy, as another antichrist, and that thereby a way shall be made for the conveniency of the Jews, those princes of the east. Others take it for the river Tiber; for as Rome is mystical Babylon, Tiber is mystical Euphrates. And when Rome is destroyed, her river and merchandize must suffer with her. 2. What did this vial produce? 1. The drying up of the river, which furnished the city with wealth, provisions, and all sorts of accommodations. 2. A way is hereby prepared *for the kings of the east*. The idolatry of the church of Rome had been a great hindrance both to the conversion of the Jews, who have been long cured of their inclination to idols, and of the Gentiles, who are hardened in their idolatry, by seeing that which so much symbolizes with it among those called Christians. And therefore it is very probable, the downfall of popery removing these obstructions, will open a way for both the Jews and other eastern nations, to come into the church of Christ. And if we suppose that Mahometanism shall fall at the same time, there will be still a more open communication between the western and eastern nations, that may facilitate the conversion of the Jews, and of the *fauxes of the Gentiles*. And when this work of God appears, and is about to be accomplished, no wonder if it occasion another consequence, which is, 3. The last effort of the great dragon; he is resolved to have another push for it, that if possible he may retrieve the ruinous posture of his affairs in the world: He is now rallying his forces, recollecting all his spirits, to make one desperate rally before all be lost. This is occasioned by the pouring out of the sixth vial. And here observe, 1. The instruments he makes use of to engage the powers of the earth in his cause and quarrel; *three unclean spirits like frogs* come forth one out of the mouth of the dragon, another out of the mouth of the beast, and a third out of the false prophet. Hell, the secular power of antichrist, and the ecclesiastical power, all combined to send their several instruments fur-

nished with hellish malice, with worldly policy, and with religious falsehood and deceit; and these should muster upon the devil's forces for a decisive battle.

2. The means these instruments would use to engage the powers of the earth in this war; they should work pretended miracles; the old stratagem of him *whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness*, 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10. Some think, a little before the fall of antichrist, the popish pretence of power to work miracles will be revived, and will very much amuse and deceive the world.

3. The field of battle, a place called Armageddon; that is, say some, the mount of Megiddo, near to which, by a stream issuing from thence, Barak overcame Sisera, and all the kings in alliance with him, *Judges* iv. 9. And in the valley of Megiddo Josiah was slain. This place had been famous of two events of a very different nature, the first very happy for the church of God, the latter very unhappy; but it should now be the field of the last battle in which the church shall be engaged, and she shall be victorious. This battle required time to prepare for it, and therefore the farther account of it is suspended till we come to the nineteenth chapter, *ver.* 19, 20.

4. The warning which God gives of this great and decisive trial, to engage his people to prepare for it, *ver.* 15. It would be sudden and unexpected, and therefore Christians should be clothed, and armed, and ready for it, that they might not be surprized and ashamed. When God's cause comes to be tried, and his battles to be fought, all his people should be ready to stand up for his interest and be faithful and valiant in his service.

17. And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. 18. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. 19. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell; and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. 20. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. 21. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

Here we have an account of the seventh and last angel pouring forth his vial, contributing his part towards the accomplishment of the downfall of Babylon, which was the finishing stroke. And here, as before, observe,

1. Where this plague fell, *on the air*, that is, upon the prince of the power of the air, that is, the devil. His powers were restrained, his policies confounded, he was bound in God's chain, the sword of God was upon his eye and upon his arm; for he, as well as the powers of the earth, is subject to the almighty power of God. He had used all possible means to preserve the antichristian interest, and to prevent the fall of Babylon; all the influence that he has upon the minds of men, blinding their judgments, and perverting them, hardening their hearts, raising their enmity to the gospel as high as could be: But now here is a vial poured out upon his kingdom, and he is not able to support his tottering cause and interest any longer.

2. What it produced, 1. A thankful voice from heaven, pronouncing, that now the work was done. The church triumphant in heaven saw it, and rejoiced; the church militant on earth saw it and became triumphant: It is finished. 2. A mighty commotion on the earth, an earthquake, so great as never was before, shaking the very center; and this ushered in by the usual concomitant of thunder and lightnings. 3. The fall of Babylon, which was divided into three parts, *called the cities of the nations*, *ver.* 19. Having had rule over the nations, and taken in the idolatry of the nations, incorporating into her religion something of the Jewish, something of the pagan, and something of the Christian religion, and so was three cities in one. God now remembered this great and wicked city, though for some time he had seemed to have forgotten her idolatry and cruelty, yet now he gives unto her *the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath*. And this downfall extended farther than to the seat of antichrist; it reached from the center to the circumference; and every island, and every mountain, that seemed by nature and situation the most secured, were carried away in the deluge of this ruin.

3. How the antichristian party were affected with it; though it fell upon them as a dreadful storm, as if the stones of the city tost up into the air came down upon their heads, like hail-stones of a talent weight each, yet they were so far from repenting, that they blasphemed that God who thus punished them. Here was a dreadful plague of the heart, a spiritual judgment more dreadful and destructive than all the rest. Observe, 1. The greatest calamities that can befall men, will not bring them to repentance without the grace of God working with them. 2. Those who are not made better by the judgments of God, are always the worse for them. 3. That to be hardened in sin and enmity against God by his righteous judgments, is a certain token of utter destruction.

C H A P. XVII.

This chapter is another representative of those things that had been revealed before, concerning the wickedness and ruin of antichrist. This antichrist had been before represented as a beast, and is now described as a great whore. And here, 1. The apostle is invited to see this vile woman, ver. 1, 2. 2. He tells us what an appearance she made ver. 3, 4, 5, 6. 3. The mystery of it is explained to him, ver. 7, —12. And, 4. Her ruin foretold, ver. 13. &c.

1. **A**ND there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither, I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore, that sitteth upon many waters: 2. With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication. 3. So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet-coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads, and ten horns. 4. And the woman was arrayed in purple, and scarlet-colour, and decked with gold, and precious stone and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. 5. And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS, AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. 6. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

Here we have a new vision, not as to the matter of it, for that is contemporary with what came under the three last vials; but as to the manner of description, &c. observe,

1. The invitation given to the apostle to take a view of what was here to be represented, ver. 1. *Come hither, and I will shew thee the judgment of the great whore, &c.* This is a name of great infamy. A whore is one that is married, and has been false to her husband's bed, has forsaken the guide of her youth, and broken the covenant of God; she had been a prostitute to the kings of the earth, whom she had intoxicated *with the wine of her fornication*.

2. The appearance she made, and it was gay and gaudy, like such sort of creatures, ver. 4. *She was arrayed in purple and scarlet colours, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls.* Here were all the allurements of worldly honour and riches, pomp and pride, suited to sensual and worldly minds.

3. Her principal seat and residence, *upon the beast that had seven heads, and ten horns, &c.* That is to say, Rome, the city on seven hills, infamous for idolatry, tyranny and blasphemy.

4. Her name, which *was written on her forehead.* It was the custom of impudent harlots to hang out signs, with their names, that all might know what they were. Now in this observe, 1. She is named from her place of residence, *Babylon the great.* But that we might not take it for the old Babylon literally so called, we are told there is a mystery in the name, it is some other great city resembling the old Babylon. She is named from her infamous way and practice; not only a harlot, but a mother of harlots; breeding up harlots, and nursing and training them up to idolatry, and all sort of lewdness and wickedness. The parent and nurse of all false religion and filthy conversation.

5. Her diet; she satiated her self with *the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus*: She drank their blood with that greediness, that she intoxicated her self with it; it was so pleasant to her, that she could not tell when she had enough of it. She was satiated, but never satisfied.

7. And the angel said unto me, Wherefore dost thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. 8. The beast that thou sawest, was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder (whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world) when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. 9. And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. 10. And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. 11. And the beast that was and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition. 12. And the ten horns which thou sawest, are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. 13. These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

Here we have the mystery of this vision explained: The apostle wondered at the sight of this woman; the angel undertakes to open this vision to him, it being the key of the former visions. And he tells the apostle what was meant by the beast on which the woman sat; but it is so explained, as still to need further explanations. 1. This

beast was, and is not, and yet is: that is, it was a seat of idolatry and persecution; and is not, that is, not in the ancient form, which was pagan; and yet it is, it is truly the seat of idolatry and tyranny, though of another sort and form. *It ascends out of the bottomless pit*; idolatry and cruelty are the issue and product of hell, and it shall return thither and go into perdition. 2. *This beast has seven heads*; which have a double signification. 1. *Seven mountains*; the seven hills on which Rome stands: And, 2. *Seven kings*, or sorts of government; Rome was governed by kings, consuls, tribunes, decemviri, dictators, emperors that were pagan, and emperors that were Christian; five of these were extinct when this prophecy was writ; one was then in being, that is, the pagan emperor; and the other, that is, the Christian emperor, was yet to come, ver. 10. This beast, the papacy, makes an eighth governor, and sets up idolatry again. 3. *This beast had ten horns*; which are said to be *ten kings, which as yet have received no kingdoms*; as yet, that is, as some, shall not rise up, till the Roman empire be broken in pieces; or, as others, shall not rise up till near the end of antichrist's reign; and so shall reign but as it were *one hour with her*, but shall for that time be very unanimous and very zealous in that interest, and entirely devoted to it, divesting themselves of their prerogatives and revenues, (things so dear to princes) out of an unaccountable fondness for the papacy.

14. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him, are called, and chosen, and faithful. 15. And he said unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are people, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. 16. And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate, and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. 17. For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. 18. And the woman which thou sawest, is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

Here we have some account of the downfall of Babylon to be more fully described in the following chapter.

1. Here is a war begun between the beast and his followers, and the Lamb and his followers; the beast and his army, to an eye of sense appear much stronger than the Lamb and his army. One would think an army with a Lamb at the head of them could not stand before *the great red dragon*. But,

2. Here is a victory gained by the Lamb; *the Lamb shall overcome*: Christ must reign till all enemies be put under his feet; he will be sure to meet with many enemies, and much opposition, but he will also be sure to gain the victory.

3. Here is the ground and reason of the victory assigned; and that is taken, 1. From the character of the Lamb, *he is King of kings, and Lord of lords*: He has both by nature and by office, supreme dominion and power over all things; all the powers of earth and hell are subject to his check and controul. 2. From the character of his followers; *they are called, and chosen, and faithful*; they are called out by commission to this warfare, they are chosen and fitted for it, and they will be faithful in it: Such an army, under such a commander will at length carry all the world before them.

4. The victory is justly aggrandized, 1. By the vast multitude that paid obedience and subjection to the beast and to the whore. She sat upon (that is, presided over) many waters: and these waters were so many multitudes of people, and nations, of all languages; yea, she reigned not only over kingdoms, but over the kings, and they were her tributaries and vassals, ver. 15, 18. 2. By the powerful influence which God hereby shewed he had over the minds of great men, their hearts were in his hand, and he turned them as he pleased; for, 1. It was of God, and to fulfil his will, that these kings agreed to give their kingdom unto the beast they were judicially blinded and hardened to do so: And, 2. It was of God, that afterwards their hearts were turned against the whore, to hate her, and to make her desolate and naked, and to eat her flesh, and burn her with fire; they shall at length see their folly, and how they have been bewitched and enslaved by the papacy, and out of a just resentment shall not only fall off from Rome, but shall be made the instruments of God's providence in her destruction.

C H A P. XVIII.

We have here, 1. An angel proclaiming the fall of Babylon, ver. 1, 2. 2. Assigning the reasons of her fall, ver. 3. 3. Giving warning to all that belonged to God, to come out of her, ver. 4, 5. and to assist in her destruction, ver. 6, 7, 8. 4. The great lamentation made for her, by those that had been large sharers in her sinful pleasures and profits, ver. 9,—20. 5. The great joy that there would be among others, at the sight of her irrecoverable ruin, ver. 20. &c.

1. **A**ND after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. 2. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and

hateful bird. 3. For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

The downfall and destruction of Babylon is an event so fully determined in the counsels of God, and of such consequence to his interests and glory, that the visions and predictions concerning it are repeated.

1. Here is another angel sent from heaven, attended with great power and lustre, *ver.* 1. He had not only light in himself to discern the truth of his own prediction, but to inform and enlighten the world about that great event; and not only light to discern it, but power to accomplish it.

2. This angel publishes the fall of Babylon, as a thing already come to pass; and this he does with a mighty strong voice; that all might hear the cry, and might see how well this angel was pleased to be the messenger of such tidings. Here seems to be an allusion to the prediction the fall of pagan Babylon, *Isa.* xxi. 9. where the word is repeated, as it is here, *is fallen, is fallen*. Some have thought a double fall is hereby intended, first her apostasy, and then her ruin; and they think the words immediately following favour their opinion, *ver.* 2. *She is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird*. But this is also borrowed from *Iai.* xxi. 9. and seems to describe not so much her sin of entertaining idols, which are truly called devils, as her punishment, it being a common notion, that unclean spirits, as well as your ominous and hateful birds, used to hunt a city or house that lay in its ruins.

3. The reason of this ruin is declared; for though God is not obliged to give any account of his matters, yet he is pleased to do so: especially in those dispensations of providence that are most awful and tremendous. The wickedness of Babylon had been very great, for she had not only forsaken the true God her self, and set up idols, but had with great art and industry drawn all sorts of men into the spiritual adultery, and by her wealth and luxury had retained them in her interest, *ver.* 3.

4. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues: 5. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities. 6. Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double, according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double. 7. How much she hath glorified her self, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow, 8. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burnt with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

Here is fair warning given to all that expect mercy from God, that they should not only *come out of her*, but be assisting in her destruction, *ver.* 4, 5. Where observe, 1. That God may have a people even in Babylon, some that belong to the election of grace. 2. That God's people shall be called out of Babylon, and called effectually. 3. Those that are resolved to partake with wicked men in their sins, must receive of their plagues. 4. That when the sins of a people reach up to heaven, the wrath of God will reach down to the earth. 5. That though private revenge is forbidden, yet God will have his people act under him, when called to it, in pulling down his and their inveterate and implacable enemies, *ver.* 6. 6. That God will proportion the punishment of sinners, to the measure of their wickedness, pride, and security, *ver.* 7. 7. That when destruction comes on a people suddenly, the surprize is a great aggravation of their misery, *ver.* 8.

9. And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication, and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, 10. Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come. 11. And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth her merchandise any more: 12. The merchandise of gold and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, 13. And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men. 14. And the fruits that thy soul lusted after, are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly, are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. 15. The merchants of these things which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off,

for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, 16. And saying, Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls: 17. For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every ship-master, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, 18. And cried, when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city? 19. And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea, by reason of her costliness: for in one hour is she made desolate.

Here we have a doleful lamentation made by Babylon's friends for her fall; and here observe,

1. Who are the mourners, those that had been bewitched by her fornication, and those that had been sharers in her sensual pleasures, and those that had been gainers by her wealth and trade, *the kings, and the merchants of the earth; the kings of the earth*, whom she had flattered into idolatry, by allowing them to be arbitrary and tyrannical over their subjects, while they were obsequious to her; and *the merchants*, that is, those that trafficked with her for indulgencies, pardons, dispensations, preterments, &c. these will mourn, because by *this craft they got their wealth*.

2. What was the manner of their mourning, 1. *They stood afar off*, they durst not come nigh her; even Babylon's friends will stand at a distance from her fall; though they had been partakers with her in her sins, and in her sinful pleasures and profits, they were not willing to bear a share in her plagues. 2. They made a grievous outcry, *Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city!* 3. They wept, and *cast dust upon their heads*, *ver.* 19. *The pleasures of sin are but for a season*, and they will end in dismal sorrow; and all those that rejoice in the success of the church's enemies, will share with them in their downfall; and those that have most indulged themselves in pride and pleasure, are the worst able to bear calamities; their sorrows will be excessive, as their pleasure and jollity was before.

3. What was the cause of their mourning, not their sin, but their punishment; they did not lament their fall into idolatry, and luxury, and persecution; but their fall into ruin; the loss of their traffick, and of their wealth and power; the spirit of antichrist is a worldly spirit, and their sorrow is a meer worldly sorrow; they do not lament for the anger of God that was now fallen upon them, but for the loss of their outward comforts; we have a large schedule and inventory of the wealth and merchandise of this city, all which was suddenly lost, *ver.* 12, 13. and lost irrecoverably, *ver.* 14. all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all; the church of God may fall for a time, but she shall rise again; but the fall of Babylon will be an utter overthrow, like that of Sodom and Gomorrah: Godly sorrow is some support under affliction, but mere worldly sorrow adds to the calamity.

20. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles, and prophets, for God hath avenged you on her. 21. And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all. 22. And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and of trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft *he be*, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee; 23. And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy forceries were all nations deceived: 24. And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

We have here an account of the joy and triumph there was both in heaven and earth at the irrecoverable fall of Babylon; while her own people were bewailing her, the servants of God are called to *rejoice over her*, *ver.* 20. where observe, 1. How universal this joy would be, heaven and earth, angels and saints, would join in it; that which is matter of rejoicing to the servants of God in this world, is matter of rejoicing to the angels in heaven. 2. How just and reasonable; and that, 1. Because the fall of Babylon was an act of God's vindictive justice, God was then avenging his peoples cause, they had committed their cause to him *to whom vengeance belongs*, and now the year of recompence was come for the controversies of Sion; and though they did not take pleasure in the miseries of any, yet they had reason to *rejoice* in the discoveries of the glorious justice of God. 2. Because it was an irrecoverable ruin, this enemy should never molest them any more, and of this they were assured by a remarkable token, *ver.* 21. *An angel from heaven takes up a stone like a great millstone, and casts it into the sea, saying, Thus shall Babylon be thrown down with violence, and be found no more at all; the place should be*

no longer habitable by man, no work should be done there, no comfort enjoyed, no light seen there, but utter darkness and desolation, as the reward of her great wickedness; first, in *deceiving the nations with her sorceries*, and, secondly, in destroying and murdering those that she could not deceive, *ver. 24.* such abominable sins deserved to great a ruin.

C H A P. XIX.

In this chapter we have, 1. *A further account of the triumphant song of angels and saints for the fall of Babylon, ver. 1,—4.* 2. *The marriage between Christ and the church proclaimed and perfected, ver. 5,—10.* 3. *Another warlike expedition of the glorious head and husband of the church, with the success of it, ver. 10, &c.*

1. **A**ND after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God: 2. For true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. 3. And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke arose up for ever and ever. 4. And the four and twenty elders, and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia.

The fall of Babylon being fixed, finished, and declared to be irrecoverable, in the foregoing chapter, this begins with a holy triumph over her, in pursuance to the order given forth, *chap. xviii. 20. Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles, and prophets.* They now gladly answer the call, and here you have, 1. The form of their thanksgiving, in that heavenly and most comprehensive word, *Alleluia, praise ye the Lord*; with this they begin, with this they go on, and with this they end, *ver. 4.* their prayers are now turned into praises, their hosannas end in halleluias. 2. The matter of their thanksgiving, they praise him for the truth of his word, and the righteousness of his providential conduct, especially in this great event, the ruin of Babylon, which had been a mother, nurse, and nest of idolatry, lewdness, and cruelty, *ver. 2.* for which signal example of divine justice, they ascribe *salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto our God.* 3. The effect of these their praises; when the angels and saints cried, *Alleluia*, her fire burned more fiercely, and her smoke ascended for ever and ever, *ver. 3.* The surest way to have our deliverances continued and compleated, is to give God the glory of what he has done for us; praising God for what we have, is praying in the most effectual manner for what is yet further to be done for us; the praises of the saints blow up the fire of God's wrath against the common enemy. 4. The blessed harmony between the angels and the saints in this triumphant song, *ver. 4.* the churches and their ministers take the melodious sound from the angels, and repeat it, falling down and worshipping God, they cry, *Amen; Alleluia.*

5. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. 6. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thundrings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth, 7. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. 8. And to her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints. 9. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage-supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God. 10. And I fell at his feet to worship him: And he said unto me, See *thou do it not*: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

The triumphant song being ended, an *epithalamium*, or marriage song, begins, *ver. 6.* where observe,

1. The consort of heavenly musick, the chorus was large, and loud, *as the voice of many waters, and of mighty thundrings*; God is fearful in praises, there is no discord in heaven, the morning stars sing together, no jarring string, or key untuned, but pure and perfect melody.

2. The occasion of this song, and that is, the reign and dominion of that omnipotent God, who has *redeemed his church by his own blood*, and is now in a more publick manner betrothing her to himself, *ver. 7.* *The marriage of the Lamb is come.* Some think, this refers to the conversion of the Jews, which they suppose will succeed the fall of Babylon; others, to the general resurrection; the former seems more probable. Now,

1. You have here a description of the bride, how she appeared, not in the gay and gaudy dress of the mother of harlots, but in *fine linen, clean and white*, which is *the righteousness of the saints*; in the robes of Christ's righteousness, both imputed for justification, and imparted for sanctification; the *stola*, the white robe of absolution, adoption, and enfranchisement; and the white robe of purity,

and universal holiness; *she had washed her robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb*; and these her nuptial ornaments she did not purchase by any price of her own, but received them as the gift and grant of her blessed Lord.

2. The marriage-feast, which though not particularly described, as *Matt. xxii. 4* yet is declared to be such as would make them all happy that were called to it, so called as to accept the invitation, a feast made up of the promises of the gospel, *the true sayings of God*, *ver. 9.* these promises, opened, applied, sealed, and earnested by *the Spirit of God* in holy, eucharistical ordinances, are the marriage-feast; and the whole collective body of all those that partake of this feast, is the bride, *the Lamb's wife*; they eat into one body, and drink into one Spirit, and are not mere spectators or guests, but coalesce into the espoused party, the mystical body of Christ.

3. The transport of joy which the apostle felt in himself at this vision, *he fell down at the feet of the angel to worship him*, supposing him to be more than a creature; or having his thoughts, at the present, overpowered by the vehemency of his affections; where observe, 1. What honour he offered to the angel, *he fell at his feet to worship him*; this prostration was a part of external worship, it was a posture of proper adoration. 2. How the angel refused it, and that was with some resentment, *See thou do it not*; have a care what thou dost, thou art doing a wrong thing. 3. He gave a very good reason for his refusal, *I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus*; I am a creature, thine equal in office, though not in nature; I, as an angel and messenger of God, *have the testimony of Jesus*, a charge to be a witness for him, and to testify concerning him; and thou, as an apostle, having *the Spirit of prophecy*, hast the same testimony to give in; and therefore we are in this brethren, and fellow-servants. 4. He directs him to the true and only object of religious worship, and that is, God; *worship God*, and him alone; this fully condemns the practice both of the papists in worshipping the elements of bread and wine, and saints, and angels; and the practice of the Socinians and Arians, who do not believe that Christ is truly, and by nature God, and yet pay him religious worship; and this shews what wretched fig-leaves all their evasions and excuses are, which they offer in their own vindication; they stand hereby convicted of idolatry by a messenger from heaven.

11. And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called faithful and true, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written that no man knew but he himself: 13. And he was clothed with a vesture dipt in blood: and his name is called, The Word of God. 14. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of almighty God. 16. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. 17. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together, unto the supper of the great God; 18. That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. 19. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. 20. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

No sooner was the marriage solemnized between Christ and his church, by the conversion of the Jews, but the glorious head and husband of the church is called out to a new expedition; which seems to be the great battle that was to be fought at Armageddon, foretold *chap. xvi. 16.* and here observe,

1. The description of the great commander; 1. By the seat of his empire, and that is *heaven*; his throne is there, and his power and authority is heavenly and divine. 2. His equipage; he is again described as sitting on a *white horse*, to shew the equity of the cause, and certainty of success. 3. His attributes; he is *faithful and true* to his covenant and promise, he is *righteous* in all his judicial and military proceedings, he has a penetrating insight into all the strength and stratagems of his enemies, he has a large and extensive dominion, *many crowns*, for he is *King of kings, and Lord of lords.* 4. His armour; and that is a *vesture dipt in blood*; either his own blood, by which he purchased this mediatorial power; or the blood of his enemies, over whom he has always prevailed. 5. *His name; The Word*

of God; a name that none fully knows but himself; only this we know, that this *Word was God manifest in the flesh*; but his perfections are incomprehensible by any creature.

2. The army which he commands, *ver. 14.* a very large one, made up of many armies, angels and saints following his conduct, and resembling him in their equipage, and in their armour of purity and righteousness; chosen, and called, and faithful.

3. The weapons of his warfare; a *sharp sword* proceeding from his mouth, *ver. 15.* with which he smites the nations; either the threatenings of the written word, which now he is going to execute, or rather, his word of command, calling on his followers to take a just revenge on his and their enemies, who are now put into the wine-press of the wrath of God, to be trodden under foot by him.

4. The ensigns of his authority, his coat of arms; a name written on his vesture and thigh, *King of kings, and Lord of lords*; asserting his authority and power, and the cause of the quarrel, *ver. 16.*

5. An invitation given to the fowls of heaven, that they should come and see the battle, and share in the spoil and pillage of the field, *ver. 17, 18.* intimating, that this great decisive engagement should leave the enemies of the church a feast for the birds of prey, and that all the world should have cause to rejoice in the issue of it.

6. The battle joined; the enemy falls on with great fury, headed by the beast, and the kings of the earth; the powers of earth and hell gathered to make their utmost effort, *ver. 19.*

7. The victory gained by the great and glorious head of the church; the beast and the false prophet, the leaders of the army, were taken prisoners, both he that led them by power, and he that led them by policy and falshood, these are taken and cast into the burning lake, made incapable of molesting the church of God any more; and their followers, whether officers, or common soldiers, are given up to military execution; and made a feast for the fowls of heaven; though the divine vengeance will chiefly fall upon the beast, and the false prophet, yet it will be no excuse to those that fight under their banner, that they only followed their leaders, and obeyed their command; since they would fight for them, they must fall and perish with them. *Be wise now therefore, O ye kings, be instructed, ye rulers of the earth; kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, Psalm ii. 10, 11.*

CHAP. XX.

This chapter is thought, by some, to be the darkest part of all this prophecy; it is very probable, the things contained in it are not yet accomplished; and therefore it is the wiser way to content ourselves with general observations, than to be positive and particular in our explanations of it. Here we have an account, 1. Of the binding of Satan for a thousand years, *ver. 1,—3.* 2. The reign of the saints with Christ for the same time, *ver. 4,—6.* 3. Of the loosing of Satan, and the conflict of the church with Gog and Magog, *ver. 7,—10.* 4. Of the day of judgment, *ver. 11, &c.*

1. **A**ND I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. 2. And he laid hold on the dragon that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 3. And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed for a little season.

We have here a prophecy of the binding of Satan for a certain term of time, in which he should have much less power, and the church much more peace, than before; the power of Satan was broke in part by the setting up of the gospel kingdom in the world, it was farther reduced by the empire's becoming Christian, it was yet further broken by the downfall of the mystical Babylon, but still this serpent had many heads, and when one is wounded, another has life remaining in it; here we have a farther limitation and diminution of his power; where observe, 1. To whom this work of binding Satan is committed, to an angel from heaven; it is very probable, this angel is no other than the Lord Jesus Christ; the description of him will hardly agree with any other; he is one that has power to bind the strong man armed, and to cast him out, and spoil his goods; and therefore must be stronger than he. 2. The means he makes use of in this work, he hath a chain, and a key; a great chain to bind Satan, and the key of the prison in which he was to be confined; Christ never wants proper powers and instruments to break the power of Satan, for he has the powers of heaven, and the keys of hell. 3. The execution of this work, *ver. 2, 3.* 1. He laid hold on the dragon that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan. Neither the strength of the dragon, nor the subtilty of the serpent, were sufficient to rescue him out of the hands of Christ; he caught hold, and kept his hold: And, 2. He cast him into the bottomless pit; cast him down with force, and with a just vengeance, to his own place and prison, from which he had been permitted to break out, and disturb the churches, and deceive the nations; now he is brought back to that prison, and there laid in chains. 3. He is shut up, and a seal set upon him; Christ shuts, and none can open; he shuts by his power, seals by his authority; and his lock and seal even the devils themselves cannot break open. 4. We have the term of this confinement of Satan, a thousand years; after which he was to be loosed again for a little season: The church should have a considerable time of peace and prosperity, but all her trials were not yet over.

4. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads; or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God, and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

We have here an account of the reign of the saints for the same space of time in which Satan continued bound; and here observe, 1. Who they were that received such honour; those that had suffered for Christ, and all that had faithfully adhered to him, not receiving the mark of the beast, nor worshipping his image; all that had kept themselves clear of pagan and papal idolatry. 2. The honour bestowed upon them; 1. They were raised from the dead, and restored to life; this may be taken either literally, or figuratively; they were in a civil and political sense dead, and had a political resurrection; their liberties and privileges were revived and restored. 2. Thrones, and power of judgment were given to them; they were possessed of great honour, and interest, and authority; I suppose rather of a spiritual, than of a secular nature. 3. They reigned with Christ a thousand years; they that suffer with Christ, shall reign with Christ; they shall reign with him in his spiritual and heavenly kingdom, in a glorious conformity to him in wisdom, righteousness, and holiness, beyond what had been known before in the world; this is called the first resurrection, which none but those that have served Christ, and suffered for him, shall be favoured with: As for the wicked, they shall not be raised up, and restored to their power again, till Satan be let loose; this may be called a resurrection, as the conversion of the Jews is said to be life from the dead. 3. The happiness of these servants of God is declared. 1. They are blessed and holy, *ver. 6.* None can be blessed, but they that are holy; and all that are holy shall be blessed: These were holy as a sort of first-fruits to God in this spiritual resurrection, and as such blessed by him. 2. They are secured from the power of the second death. We know something what the first death is, and it is awful; but we know not what this second death is; it must be much more dreadful; it is the death of the soul, eternal separation from God. The Lord grant we may never know what it is by experience; they that have had experience of a spiritual resurrection, are saved from the power of the second death.

7. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 8. And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. 9. And they went up on the breadth of the earth and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. 10. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night, for ever and ever.

Here we have an account of the return of the church's troubles, and another mighty conflict, very sharp, but short and decisive. Observe, 1. The restraints laid for a long time on Satan, are at length taken off; while this world lasts, Satan's power in it will not be wholly destroyed; it may be limited and lessened, but he will have something still to do for the disturbance of the people of God. 2. No sooner is Satan let loose, but he falls to his old work, deceiving the nations, and so stirring them up to make war with the saints and servants of God, which they would never do, if he had not first deceived them; they are deceived both as to the cause they engage in, they believe it to be a good cause, when it is indeed a very bad one; and they are deceived in the issue, they expect to be successful, but are sure to lose the day. 3. His last efforts seem to be the greatest; the power now permitted to him seems to be more unlimited than before; he has now liberty to beat up for his volunteers in all the four quarters of the earth, and he raised a mighty army; the number of which was as the sand of the sea, *ver. 8.* 4. We have the names of the principal commanders in this army under the dragon, Gog and Magog; we need not be too inquisitive what particular powers are meant by these names, since the army was gathered from all parts of the world; these names are found in other parts of scripture; Magog we read of in *Gen. x. 2.* he was one of the sons of Japhael, and peopled the country called Syria, from which his descendants spread into many other parts; of Gog and Magog together we only read in *Ezekiel xxxviii. 2.* a prophecy from whence this in the Revelation borrows many of its images. 5. We have the march and military disposition of this formidable army, *ver. 9.* They went up on the breadth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city, that is, the spiritual Jerusalem, in which the most precious interests of the people of God are lodged, and therefore to them a beloved city; the army of the saints is described as drawn forth out of the city, and lying under the walls of it, to defend it; they were encamped

camped about Jerusalem ; but the army of the enemy was so much superior to that of the church, that they compassed them and their city about. 6. You have an account of the battle, and the issue of this war ; *fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured the enemy.* Thus the ruin of Gog and Magog is foretold, Ezek. xxxviii. 22. *I will rain upon him, and upon his bounds an overflowing rain, and great hail-stones, and fire and brimstone.* God would, in an extraordinary and more immediate manner, fight this last and decisive battle for his people, that the victory might be compleat, and the glory redound to himself. 7. The doom and punishment of the grand enemy, the devil ; he is now cast into hell, with his two great officers, the beast and the false prophet, tyranny and idolatry, and that not for any term of time, but to be there tormented night and day, for ever and ever.

11. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away, and there was found no place for them. 12. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books were opened : and another book was opened, which is the book of life : and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it ; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them : and they were judged every man according to their works. 14. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire : This is the second death. 15. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire.

The utter destruction of the devil's kingdom, very properly leads to an account of the day of judgment, which will determine every man's everlasting state ; and we may be assured there will be a judgment, when we see the prince of this world is judged, John xvi. 11. this will be a great day, the great day, when all shall appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. The Lord help us firmly to believe this doctrine of the judgment to come ! it is a doctrine that made Felix tremble. Here we have a description of it ; where observe, 1. We behold the throne, and tribunal of judgment, great and white, very glorious, and perfectly just and righteous : *The throne of iniquity, that establishes wickedness by a law, has no fellowship with this righteous throne and tribunal.* 2. The appearance of the judge, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ, who then puts on such majesty and terror, that the earth and the heaven fled from his face, and there was no place found for them ; there is a dissolution of the whole frame of nature, 2 Pet. iii. 10. 3. The persons to be judged, ver. 12. The dead, small and great ; both young and old, low and high, poor and rich ; none so mean, but they have some talents to account for ; and none so great, as to avoid the jurisdiction of this court : Not only those that are found alive at the coming of Christ, but all that have died before ; the grave shall surrender the bodies of men, hell shall surrender the souls of the wicked, the sea shall surrender the many that seemed to have been lost in it : All these are the king's prisons, and he will cause them to set forth their prisoners. 4. The rule of judgment settled, the books were opened : What books ? Why the book of God's omniscience, who is greater than our consciences, and knows all things. There is a book of remembrance with him both for good and bad ; and the book of the sinner's conscience, which though formerly secret, will now be opened ; and another book shall be opened, the book of the scriptures, the statute book of heaven, the rule of life ; this book is opened, as containing the law, the touchstone by which the hearts and lives of men are to be tried ; this book determines matter of right, the other books give evidence of matters of fact ; some, by the other book, called the book of life, understand the book of God's eternal counsels ; but that does not seem to belong to the affair of judgment ; in eternal election God does not act judicially, but with absolute, sovereign freedom. 5. The cause to be tried, and that is, the works of men, what they have done, and whether it be good or evil ; by their works men shall be justified, or condemned ; for though God knows their state and their principles, and looks chiefly at these, yet, being to approve himself to angels and men as a righteous God, he will try their principles by their practices, and so will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges. 6. The issue of the trial and judgment, and that will be according to the evidence of fact, and rule of judgment ; all those that have made a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell, shall then be condemned with their infernal confederates, cast with them into the lake of fire, as not being entitled to eternal life, according to the rules of life laid down in the scripture ; but those whose names are written in that book, that is, those who are justified and acquitted by the gospel, shall then be justified and acquitted by the judge, and shall enter into eternal life, having nothing more to fear from death, or hell, or wicked men ; for these are all destroyed together. Let it be our great concern to see on what terms we stand with our bibles, whether they justify us or condemn us now ; for the judge of all will proceed by that rule : Christ shall judge the secrets of all men according to the gospel : Happy are they that have so ordered and stated their cause according to the gospel, as to know beforehand that they shall be justified in the great day of the Lord !

C H A P. XXI.

Hitherto the prophecy of this book has presented to us a very remarkable mixture of light and shade, prosperity and adversity, mercy and judgment, in the conduct of divine providence towards the church in the world ; now, at the close of all, the day breaks, and the shadows flee away ; a new world now appears, the former being passed away. Some are willing to understand all that is said in these two last chapters, of the state of the church even here on earth, in the glory of the latter days ; but others, more probably, take it as a representation of the perfect and triumphant state of the church in heaven : Let but the faithful saints and servants of God wait a while, and they shall not only see, but enjoy the perfect holiness and happiness of that world. In this chapter you have, 1. An introduction to the vision of the new Jerusalem, ver. 1,—9. 2. The vision itself, ver. 10, &c.

1. **A**ND I saw a new heaven, and a new earth : for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away ; and there was no more sea. 2. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 4. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away. 5. And he that sat upon the throne, said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write : for these words are true and faithful. 6. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end : I will give unto him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely. 7. He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. 8. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and forcerers, and idolaters, and all lyers, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone : which is the second death.

We have here a more general account of the happiness of the church of God in the future state, which it seems most safe to understand the heavenly state.

1. A new world now opens to our view, ver. 1. *I saw a new heaven, and a new earth*, that is, a new universe ; for we suppose the world to be made up of heaven and earth : By the new earth we may understand a new state for the bodies of men, as well as a heaven for their souls : This world is not now newly created, but newly opened, and filled with all those that were the heirs of it : The new heaven, and the new earth, will not then be distinct ; the very earth of the saints, their glorified bodies, will now be spiritual and heavenly, and suited to those pure and bright mansions. To make way for the commencement of this new world, the old world, with all its troubles and commotions, passed away.

2. In this new world the apostle saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, not locally, but as to its original ; this new Jerusalem is the church of God in its new and perfect state, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband, beautified with all perfection of wisdom and holiness, meet for the full fruition of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory.

3. The blessed presence of God with his people is here proclaimed and admired, ver. 3. *I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, &c.* Observe, 1. The presence of God with his church is the glory of the church. 2. It is matter of wonder that a holy God should ever dwell with any of the children or men. 3. That the presence of God with his people in heaven will not be interrupted as it is on earth, but he will dwell with them continually. 4. That the covenant, interest, and relation that there is now between God and his people, will be filled up and perfected in heaven. They shall be his people, their souls shall be assimilated to him, filled with all the love, honour, and delight in God, that their relation to him requires ; this shall be their perfect holiness, and he will be their God ; God himself will be their God ; his immediate presence with them, his love fully manifested to them, and his glory put upon them, will be their perfect happiness ; then he will fully answer the character of the relation on his part, as they shall do on their part.

4. This new and blessed state will be free from all trouble and sorrow ; for, 1. All the effects of former trouble shall be done away ; they have been often before in tears, by reason of sin, of affliction, of the calamities of the church ; but now all tears shall be wiped away, no signs, no remembrance of former sorrows shall remain, any farther than to make their present felicity the greater ; God himself, as their tender Father, with his own kind hand, shall wipe away the tears of his children ; and they would not have been without those tears, when God shall come and wipe them away. 2. All the causes of future sorrow shall be for ever removed ; there shall be neither death, nor pain ; and therefore no sorrow, nor crying ; these

are things incident to that state in which they were before, but now all former things are passed away.

5. The truth and certainty of this blessed state is ratified by the word and promise of God, and ordered to be committed to writing, as matter of perpetual record, *ver. 6, 7.* The subject matter of this vision is so great, and of so great importance to the church and people of God, that they have need of the most full assurances of it; and God therefore from heaven repeats and ratifies the truth thereof: And besides, many ages must pass between the time when this vision was given forth, and the accomplishment of it, and many great trials must intervene; and therefore God would have it committed to writing, for perpetual memory, and continual use to his people. Observe, 1. The certainty of the promise averred, *these words are faithful and true*; and it follows, *It is done*, as sure as if it were done already. We may and ought to take God's promise as present payment; if he has said, he *makes all things new; it is done.* 2. He gives us his titles of honour as a pledge or surety of the full performance, even those titles of *Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.* As it was his glory that he gave the rise and beginning to the world, and to his church, it will be his glory to finish the work begun, and not to leave it imperfect: As his power and will was the first cause of all things, his pleasure and glory is the last end, and he will not lose his design; for then he should no longer be *the Alpha and Omega*: Men may begin designs which they can never bring to perfection, but *the counsel of God shall stand*, and he will do all his pleasure. 3. The desires of his people towards this blessed state, are another evidence of the truth and certainty of it; they thirst after a state of sinless perfection, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of God; and God has wrought in them these longing desires, which cannot be satisfied with any thing else, and therefore would be the torment of the soul if they were disappointed; but it would be inconsistent with the goodness of God, and his love to his people, to create in them holy and heavenly desires, and then deny them their proper satisfaction; and therefore they may be assured, when they have overcome their present difficulties, *he will give them of the fountain of the water of life freely.*

6. The greatness of this future felicity is declared and illustrated, 1. By the freeness of it; it is the free gift of God; *he gives of the waters of life freely*; this will not make it less, but more grateful to his people. 2. The fulness of it; the people of God then lie at the fountain-head of all blessedness, they *inherit all things*, *ver. 7.* enjoying God, they enjoy all things, he is all in all. 3. By the tenure and title by which they enjoy this blessedness; by right of inheritance, as *the sons of God*; a title of all others the most honourable, as resulting from so near and endeared a relation to God himself, and the most sure and indefeasible, that can no more cease, than the relation from which it results. 4. By the vastly different state of the wicked; their misery helps to illustrate the glory and blessedness of the saints, and the distinguishing goodness of God towards them, *ver. 8.* where observe, 1. The sins of those that perish, among which are first mentioned their cowardliness and unbelief; *the fearful* lead the van in this black list; they durst not encounter the difficulties of religion, and their slavish fear proceeded from their unbelief; but those that were so dastardly as not to dare to take up the cross of Christ, and discharge their duty to him, were yet so desperate as to run into all manner of abominable wickedness, *murder, adultery, sorcery, idolatry, and lying.* 2. Their punishment; *they have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.* 1. They could not burn at a stake for Christ, but they must burn in hell for sin. 2. They must die another death after their natural death; the agonies and terrors of the first death will consign them over to the far greater terrors and agonies of eternal death; to die, and to be always dying. 3. This misery will be their proper part and portion, what they have justly deserved, what they have in effect chosen, and what they have prepared themselves for by their sins: Thus the misery of the damned will illustrate the blessedness of those that are saved, and their blessedness will aggravate the others misery.

9. And there came unto me one of the seven angels, which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lambs wife. 10. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, 11. Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper-stone, clear as crystal; 12. And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. 13. On the east, three gates; on the north, three gates; on the south, three gates; and on the west, three gates. 14. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. 15. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. 16. And the city lieth four-square, and the length is as large as the breadth:

and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs: the length, and the breadth, and the height of it are equal 17. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. 18. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. 19. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; 20. The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysophrasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. 21. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

We have already considered the introduction to the vision of the new Jerusalem in a more general idea of the heavenly state, we now come to the vision itself; where observe,

1. The person that opened the vision to the apostle, *one of the seven angels, that had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues*, *ver. 9.* God has a variety of work and employment for his holy angels, sometimes they are to sound the trumpet of divine providence; and give fair warning to a careless world; sometimes they are to pour out the vials of God's anger upon impenitent sinners; and sometimes to discover things of an heavenly nature to those that are *the heirs of salvation*; and they readily execute every commission they receive from God: And when this world shall be at an end, yet the angels shall be employed by the great God in proper, pleasant work to all eternity.

2. The place from which the apostle had this glorious view and prospect; he was taken in ecstasy into a *high mountain*; from such situations men usually have the most distinct views of adjacent cities; they that would have clear views of heaven, must get as near heaven as they can, into the mount of vision, the mount of meditation and faith, from whence, as from *the top of Pisgah*, they may behold the *goodly land of the heavenly Canaan.*

3. The subject matter of the vision, *the bride, the Lamb's wife*, *ver. 10.* that is, the church of God in her glorious, perfect, triumphant state, under the resemblance of Jerusalem, having the glory of God shining in its lustre, as *uxor splendet radiis mariti*; comely through his comeliness put upon her; glorious in her relation to Christ, and in his image now perfected in her, and his favour shining upon her; and now we have a large description of the church triumphant under the emblem of a city, far exceeding, in riches and splendor, all the cities of this world; and this *new Jerusalem* is here represented to us, both in the exterior and interior part of it.

1. The exterior part of the city, *the wall, and the gates; the wall* for security, and *the gates* for entrance.

1. *The wall* for security; heaven is a safe state, those that are there are enclosed with a *wall*, that separates them, and secures them from all evils and enemies; now here, in the account of *the wall*, we observe, 1. The height of it, which we are told is very *high, seventy yards*, *ver. 17.* sufficient both for ornament and security. 2. The matter of it; *it was as jasper; a wall* all built of the most precious stones, for firmness and lustre, *ver. 11.* this city has a *wall* that is impregnable, as well as precious. 3. The form of it was very regular and uniform, *it was four-square, the length as large as the breadth.* In the *new Jerusalem* all shall be equal in purity and perfection; there shall be an absolute uniformity in the church triumphant; a thing wanted and wished for on earth, but not to be expected till we come to heaven. 4. The measure of *the wall*, *ver. 15, 16.* *twelve thousand furlongs* each way, each side, which is forty eight thousand furlongs in the whole compass, or fifteen hundred German miles; here is room sufficient for all the people of God; *many mansions in their Father's house.* 5. *The foundation of the wall*, for heaven is a city that hath her foundations, *ver. 19.* the promise and power of God, and the purchase of Christ, are the strong foundations of the church's safety and happiness; *the foundations* are described by their number, and by their matter; by their number, *twelve*; alluding to the twelve apostles, *ver. 14.* whose gospel doctrines are *the foundations upon which the church is built, Christ himself being the chief corner-stone*; and as to the matter of these foundations, it was various and precious, set forth by twelve sorts of precious stones, denoting the variety and excellency of the doctrines of the gospel, or of the graces of the holy Spirit, or the personal excellencies of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The gates for entrance. Heaven is not inaccessible; there is a way opened into the holiest of all; there is a free admission to all those that are sanctified; they shall not find themselves shut out. Now as to these gates, observe, 1. Their number, *they are twelve gates, answering to the twelve tribes of Israel.* All the true Israel of God shall have entrance into the new Jerusalem, as every tribe had into the earthly Jerusalem. 2. Their guards which were placed upon them, *twelve angels*; to admit and receive the several tribes of the spiritual Israel, and to keep out others. 3. The inscription on the gates, *the names of the twelve tribes*; to shew they have a right to

to the tree of life, and to enter through the gates into the city. 4. The situation of the gates. As the city had four equal sides, answering to the four quarters of the world, east, west, north and south; so in each side there were three gates, signifying that from all quarters of the earth there shall be some that shall get safe to heaven and be received there, and that there is as free entrance from one part of the world, as from the other; for in Christ there is neither Jew, nor Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free; men of all nations, and languages that believe on Christ, have by him access to God in grace here, and in glory hereafter. 5. The materials of these gates, *they were all of pearls*, and yet with great variety, *every gate one pearl*; either one single pearl of that vast bigness, or one single sort of pearl. Christ is the pearl of great price, and he is our way to God. There is nothing magnificent enough in this world fully to set forth the glory of heaven. Could we in the glass of a strong imagination contemplate such a city as is here described, even as to the exterior part of it; such a wall, and such gates, how amazing, how glorious would the prospect be! and yet this but a faint and dim representation of what heaven is in it self.

22. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it. 23. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. 24. And the nations of them which are saved, shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. 25. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. 26. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. 27. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither *whatsoever* worketh abomination, or *maketh* a lye: but they which are written in the Lambs book of life.

Now we come to take a view of the interior part of the new Jerusalem. You have seen its strong wall, and stately gates, and glorious guards; now we are to be led through the gates into the city it self; and the first thing which we observe there is the street of the city, *which was pure gold, like transparent glass*, ver. 21. The saints in heaven tread upon gold. The new Jerusalem has its several streets. There is the most exact order in heaven; every saint has his proper mansion. There is converse in heaven; the saints are then at rest; but it is not a meer passive rest; it is not a state of sleep and inactivity, but a state of delightful motion; *the nations that are saved, walk in the light of it*; they walk with Christ in white; they have communion not only with God, but with one another; and all their steps are firm and clean, they are pure and clear *as gold, and transparent glass*.

1. The temple of the new Jerusalem, which was no material temple, made with mens hands, as that of Solomon and Zerubbabel, but a temple altogether spiritual and divine, *for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple thereof*. There the saints are above the need of ordinances; which were the means of their preparation for heaven. When the end is attained, the means are no longer useful. Perfect and immediate communion with God will more than supply the place of gospel institutions.

3. The light of this city. Where there is no light, there can be no lustre, nor pleasure. *Heaven is the inheritance of the saints in light*. But what is that light? There is no sun nor moon shining there, ver. 23. Light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun. What a dismal world would this be, if it were not for the light of the sun! What is there in heaven that supplies the want of it? Why, there is no want of the light of the sun, *for the glory of God lightens that city, and the Lamb is the light thereof*. God in Christ will be an everlasting fountain of knowledge and joy to the saints in heaven; and if so, there is no need of the sun or moon, no more than we here need to set up candles at noon-day, when the sun shineth in its strength.

4. The inhabitants of this city; they are described here several ways. 1. By their numbers; here are whole nations of saved souls; some out of all nations, and many out of some nations. All those multitudes that were sealed on earth, are saved in heaven. 2. By their dignity; some of the kings and princes of the earth. Great kings; God will have some of all ranks and degrees of men to fill the heavenly mansions; high and low, and when the greatest kings come to heaven, they will see all their former honour and glory swallowed up of this heavenly glory, that so much excels. 3. Their continual accession and entrance into this city; *the gates shall never be shut*. Their is no night, and therefore no need of shutting up the gates. Some one or other are coming in every hour and moment; and those that are sanctified, always find the gates open; they have *an abundant entrance into the kingdom*.

5. The accommodations of this city; all the *glory and honour of the nations shall be brought into it*; whatever is excellent and valuable in this world, shall be there enjoyed in a more refined kind, and to a far greater degree. Brighter crowns, a better and more enduring substance more sweet and satisfying feasts, a more glorious attendance, a truer sense of honour, and far higher posts of honour, a more glorious tem-

per of mind, and a more glorious form and countenance, than ever was known in this world.

6. And lastly, the unmixed purity of all that belong to the new Jerusalem, ver. 27. There the saints shall have no impure thing remain in them. In the article of death they shall be cleansed from every thing that is of a defiling nature. Now they feel a sad mixture of corruption with their graces, which hinder them in the service of God, and interrupt their communion with him, and intercept the light of his countenance; but at their entrance into the holy of holies, they are washed in the laver of Christ's blood, and presented to the Father without spot. 2. There the saints shall have no impure persons admitted among them; in the earthly Jerusalem there will be a mixed communion, after all the care that can be taken. Some roots of bitterness will spring up to trouble and defile Christian societies; but in the new Jerusalem there is a society perfectly pure; free, 1. From such as are openly profane. There are none admitted into heaven that work abominations. In the churches on earth, sometimes abominable things are done, solemn ordinances profaned, and prostituted to men openly vicious, for worldly ends; but no such abominations can have place in heaven. 2. Free from hypocrites, such as make lyes, say they are Jews, and are not, but do lye. These will creep into the churches of Christ on earth, and may lie concealed there a long time, perhaps all their days; but they cannot intrude into the new Jerusalem, which is wholly reserved for those that are called, and chosen, and faithful; who are all written, not only in the register of the visible church, *but in the Lamb's book of life*.

C H A P. XXII.

In this chapter we have, 1. A farther description of the heavenly state of the church, ver. 1,—6. 2. A confirmation of this and all the other visions of this book, ver. 6,—20. 3. The conclusion, ver. 20, 21.

1. **A**ND he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and of the Lamb. 2. In the midst of the street of it, and of either side the river, *was there the tree of life*, which bear twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree *were* for the healing of the nations. 3. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him. 4. And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. 5. And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever.

The heavenly state which was before described as a city, and called *the new Jerusalem*, is here described as a paradise; alluding to the earthly paradise which was lost by the sin of the first Adam; here is another paradise restored by the second Adam. A paradise in a city, or a whole city in a paradise! In the first paradise there were only two persons to behold the beauty and taste the pleasures of it; but in this second paradise whole cities and nations shall find abundant delight and satisfaction. And here observe,

1. The river of paradise: the earthly paradise was well watered; no place can be pleasant or fruitful that is not so. This river is described, 1. By its fountain-head, *the throne of God, and the Lamb*: All our springs, both of grace, comfort and glory, are in God, and all our streams from him, through the mediation of the Lamb. 2. By its quality; *pure, and clear as crystal*: All the streams of earthly comfort are muddy, but these are clear, and salutary, and refreshing, giving life, and preserving life to those that drink of it.

2. *The tree of life*, in this paradise: Such a tree there was in the earthly paradise, Gen. ii. 9. This far excels it. And now as to this tree, observe, 1. The situation of it, *in the midst of the street, and of either side the river*; or, as it might have been better rendered, *in the midst between the terras-walk and the river*. This tree of life is fed by the pure waters of the river that comes from the throne of God. The presence and perfections of God furnish out all the glory and blessedness of heaven. 2. The fruitfulness of this tree. 1. It brings forth many sorts of fruit, *twelve sorts*, suited to the refined taste of all the saints. 2. It brings forth fruit at all times, *yieldeth its fruit every month*; this tree is never empty, never barren; there is always fruit upon it. In heaven there is not only a variety of pure and satisfying pleasures, but a continuance of them, and always fresh. 3. The fruit is not only pleasant, but wholesome. The presence of God in heaven, is the health and happiness of the saints, there they find in him a remedy for all their former maladies, and are preserved by him in the most healthful and vigorous state.

3. The perfect freedom of this paradise from every thing that is evil, ver. 3. *There shall be no more curse*; no accursed one, *neither serpent*, no serpent there, as there was in the earthly paradise: Here is the great excellency of this paradise, the devil has nothing to do there; he cannot draw the saints from serving God to be subject to himself, as he did our first parents; nor can he so much as disturb them in the service of God.

4. The supreme felicity of this paradisiacal state. 1. There the saints shall see the face of God; there they shall enjoy the beatific vision

vision. 2. God will own them, as having his seal and name on their foreheads. 3. *They shall reign with him for ever*; their service shall be not only freedom, but honour and dominion. 4. All this shall be with perfect knowledge and joy. They shall be full of wisdom and comfort, continually walking in the light of the Lord; and this not for a time, but *for ever and ever*.

6. And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true. And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. 7. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. 8. And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel, which shewed me these things. 9. Then saith he unto me, See *thou do it not*: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. 10. And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. 11. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. 12. And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. 13. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. 14. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. 15. For without are dogs, and forcers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. 16. I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. 17. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth, say, Come. And let him that is athirst, come: And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. 18. For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

We have here a solemn ratification of the contents of this book, and particularly of this last vision, though some think it may not only refer to the whole book, but to the whole New Testament, yea, to the whole bible, compleating and confirming the canon of scripture. And here, 1. This is confirmed by the name and nature of that God that gave out these discoveries, *he is the Lord God, faithful and true*, and so are all his sayings. 2. By the messengers he chose to reveal these things to the world, the holy angels shewed them to holy men of God; and God would not employ his saints and angels in deceiving the world. 3. They will soon be confirmed by their accomplishment, they are things that must shortly be done; Christ will make haste, *he will come quickly*, and put all things out of doubt; and then they will prove the wise and happy men that have believed and kept his words. 4. By the integrity of that angel that had been the apostle's guide and interpreter in these visions; and that integrity was such as that he not only refused to accept religious adoration from John, but once and again reprov'd him for it. He who was so tender of the honour of God, and so displeased with what was a wrong to God, would never come in his name to lead the people of God into mere dreams and delusions; and it still is a farther confirmation of the sincerity of this apostle, that he confesses his own sin and folly, into which he had now again relapsed, and he leaves this his failing on perpetual record; and this shews he was a faithful and an impartial writer. 5. By the order given to leave the book of the prophecy open, to be perused by all, that they might labour to understand it, that they might make their objections against it, and compare the prophecy with the events; God here deals freely and openly with all; he does not speak in secret, but calls every one to witness to the declarations here made, *ver. 10.* 6. By the effect this book thus kept open will have upon men, those that are filthy and unjust, will take that occasion from thence to be more so, but it will confirm, strengthen, and farther sanctify those that are upright with God; it will be a favour of life to some, and of death to others, and so will appear to be from God, *ver. 12.* 7. It will be Christ's rule of judgment at the great day; he will dispense rewards and punishments to men according as their works agree or disagree with the word of God; and therefore that word itself must needs be faithful and true. 8. It is the word of him who is the author, finisher, and rewarder of the faith and holiness of his people, *ver. 13. 14.* He is

the first and the last, and the same from first to last, and so is his word too; and he will by this word give to his people, that conform themselves to it, *a right to the tree of life*, and an entrance into heaven; and this will be a full confirmation of the truth and authority of his word, since it contains the title and evidence of that confirmed state of holiness and happiness that remains for his people in heaven. 9. It is a book that condemns and excludes from heaven all wicked, unrighteous persons, and particularly *those that love and make lies, ver. 15.* and therefore can never be itself a lie. 10. It is confirmed by the testimony of Jesus, which is the Spirit of prophecy. And this Jesus, as God, is the root of David; though as man, his offspring; a person in whom all uncreated and created excellencies meet; too great and too good to deceive his churches and the world. He is the fountain of all light, the bright and the morning star; and as such has given to his churches this morning light of prophecy, to assure them of the light of that perfect day that is approaching. 11. It is confirmed by an open and general invitation to all, to come and partake of the promises and privileges of the gospel, those streams of the water of life; these are tendred to all that feel in their souls a thirst which nothing in this world can quench. 12. It is confirmed by the joint testimony of the Spirit of God, and that gracious spirit that is in all the true members of the church of God, the Spirit and the bride join in testifying the truth and excellency of the gospel. 13. Lastly it is confirmed by a most solemn sanction, condemning and cursing all that should dare to corrupt or change the word of God, either by adding to it, or taking from it, *ver. 18, 19.* He that adds to the word of God draws down upon himself all the plagues written in this book; and he that takes any thing away from it, cuts himself off from all the promises and privileges of it; this sanction is like a flaming sword to guard the canon of the scripture from profane hands. Such a fence as this God set about the law, *Dent. iv. 2.* and the whole Old Testament, *Mal. iv. 4.* and now in the most solemn manner about the whole bible; assuring us that it is a book of the most sacred nature, divine authority, and of the last importance, and therefore the peculiar care of the great God.

20. He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come Lord Jesus. 21. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

We are now come to the conclusion of the whole; and that in three things, 1. Christ's farewell to his church: He seems now, after he had been discovering these things to his people on earth, to take leave of them, and return to heaven; but he parts with them in great kindness, and assures them it shall not be long before he comes again to them; *behold, I come quickly*; as when he ascended into heaven after his resurrection, he parted with a promise of his gracious presence, so here he parts with a promise of a speedy return. If any say, where is the promise of his coming, when so many ages are now past since this was written? let them know he is not slack to his people, but long-suffering to his enemies; his coming will be sooner than they are aware, sooner than they are prepared, sooner than they desire; and to his people it will be seasonable; the vision is for an appointed time, and will not tarry, *he will come quickly*; let this word be always sounding in our ear, and let us give all diligence that we may be found of him in peace, *without spot and blameless.* 2. The church's hearty echo to Christ's promise: 1. Declaring her firm belief of it, *amen, so it is*, so it shall be. 2. Expressing her earnest desire of it, *even so, come Lord Jesus; make haste, my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or like a young hart on the mountains of spices.* Thus beats the pulse of the church, thus breaths that gracious Spirit, which actuates and informs the mystical body of Christ; and we should never be satisfied, till we find such a spirit breathing in us, and causing us to look for the blessed hope, and glorious appearance of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; *this is the language of the church of the first-born*, and we should join with them, often putting our selves in mind of his promise. What comes from heaven in a promise, should be sent back to heaven in a prayer. *Come, Lord Jesus*, put an end to this state of sin, sorrow and temptation; gather thy people out of this present evil world, and take them up to heaven, that state of perfect purity, peace and joy, and so finish thy great design, and fulfil all that word, in which thou hast caused thy people to hope. 3. The apostolical benediction which closes the whole; *the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen.* Where observe, 1. The bible ends with a clear proof of the Godhead of Christ, since the Spirit of God teaches the apostle to bless his people in the name of Christ, and to beg from Christ a blessing for them; this is a proper act of adoration. 2. Nothing should be more desired by us, than that the grace of Christ may be with us in this world, to prepare us for the glory of Christ in the other world: It is by his grace that we must be kept in a joyful expectation of his glory, and fitted for it, and preserved to it; and his glorious appearance will be welcome and joyful to those that are partakers of his grace and favour here; and therefore to this most comprehensive prayer we should all add our hearty Amen; most earnestly thirsting after greater measures of the gracious influences of the blessed Jesus in our souls, and his gracious presence with us, till glory has perfected all his grace towards us, for he is a sun and a shield, *he gives grace and glory, and the good thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

